

**Title: *Lessons of Faith From Joshua***

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***Lessons of Faith From Joshua***

**by: Barna Magyarosi**

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## **Second Chances: The Book of Joshua**

The book of Joshua marks the transition from the leadership of Moses to that of Joshua. It begins with the story of Israel entering the Promised Land and ends with them settled in that land.

Joshua, indeed, had a tough act to follow. That is, to pick up where Moses (Moses!) had left off. But that challenge was only the beginning. Joshua was to do what Moses never did: take the nation, after 40 years in the desert, across the Jordan and into Canaan, according to the promise that God had made to the fathers years before.

“Moses My servant is dead. Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them—the children of Israel” (*Josh. 1:2, NKJV*).

The key to the whole story is found here, in the Lord’s words to Joshua: they are going to enter “the land which I [YHVH] am giving to them.”

Yes, Joshua is not going to do it alone, but only through the power and guidance of the Lord, who would have



**Introduction: *Lessons of Faith From Joshua***

brought the people into the land a generation earlier had they obeyed their end of the covenant. Unfortunately, they didn't, and thus, they met the consequences of their actions.

The fact is, during the preceding 40 years, Israel had faced the negative side of the covenant. Because of their rebellion against God, the entire adult generation who experienced the wonders and marvels of Exodus, with the exception of Caleb and Joshua, perished in the desert. Four of the five books of Moses deal with what happened to them as they wandered in the desert all that time. Now, under the leadership of Joshua, the second generation was ready to undertake the challenges of possessing the land.

"Then Moses called Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, 'Be strong and of good courage, for you must go with this people to the land which the LORD has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall cause them to inherit it. And the LORD, He is the One who goes before you. He will be with you, He will not leave you nor forsake you; do not fear nor be dismayed'" (*Deut. 31:7, 8, NKJV*).

The promises of God given to the patriarchs and to Moses are about to be fulfilled. There is an air of

**Introduction: *Lessons of Faith From Joshua***

expectation and excitement, a new beginning for the people, long homeless and dispossessed. God has been faithful in delivering them from slavery, and He can certainly be trusted to fulfill His promises concerning the land.

“The primary purpose of the book of Joshua is to describe Israel’s entry into the land of promise, the conquest of the land, and its division among the tribes. This purpose underlies the message of the book, namely, the faithfulness of God in fulfilling the promise of land made to Abraham. The book emphasizes God’s faithfulness to His covenant promises (Josh. 21:43-45).”—*Andrews Bible Commentary* (Andrews University Press, 2020), p. 365.

We will discover together that, though the book of Joshua was written more than three millennia ago, the world in which we live today is not so different from that of Joshua in its spiritual challenges. We might face challenges of a different nature, but nonetheless there are challenges, especially spiritual ones, that threaten our security, our faith, and the fulfillment of the mission God has entrusted to His people. The example of Joshua will certainly inspire us to claim God’s promises concerning our times and to succeed through His power, as he did.

**Introduction: *Lessons of Faith From Joshua***

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## Recipe *for* Success

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### SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Deut. 18:15-22; Joshua 1;*

*Heb. 6:17, 18; Eph. 6:10-18; Ps. 1:1-3; Rom. 3:31.*

**Memory Text:** "Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go" (*Joshua 1:7, NKJV*).

**B**enjamin Zander, musical director of the Boston Philharmonic Orchestra, taught a music interpretation class. He observed the students' anxiety as they faced the evaluation of their performance. In order to put the students at ease and to open them up to their full potential, he announced on the first day of the class that everybody would get an "A." This "A" was not an expectation to live up to "but a possibility to live into." The only requirement was for the students to write a letter within the first two weeks of the semester but dated at the end of the class. The letter explained why they deserved the high grade.

The book of Joshua is about new possibilities. Moses, who had dominated 40 years of Israel's history, belonged in the past. The Exodus from Egypt and the wanderings in the wilderness, tragically marked by rebellion and stubbornness, had ended. A new generation, willing to obey God, was ready to enter the Promised Land, not as an expectation to live up to but as a possibility to live into.

Let's study the way God opened up a new chapter in Israel's life, and how He can do the same in ours as well.

*\*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, October 4.*

**SUNDAY**

*September 28*

## **A New Moses**

Read Deuteronomy 18:15–22 and Joshua 1:1–9. Why is it significant that the book of Joshua starts by echoing a promise related to what would happen after the death of Moses?

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Though Moses had died and a new leader, Joshua, had been appointed by God, there are parallels between them. Both men had been told by God that they would lead their people into the land promised to their fathers. As the Lord said to Joshua: “Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses” (*Josh. 1:3, NKJV*). Joshua would finish the work that had

originally been given to Moses. He was, really, a new Moses.

**Read Exodus 33:11; Numbers 14:6, 30, 38; Numbers 27:18; Numbers 32:12; Deuteronomy 1:38; Deuteronomy 31:23; and Deuteronomy 34:9. What do these texts tell us about Joshua?**

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At this stage, the promise that God would "raise up" a prophet similar to Moses (*Deut. 18:15*) is only a possibility rather than an accomplished reality. The opening words of the book of Joshua remind the reader of this promise and, at the same time, create an expectation to see it fulfilled.

Though dead, Moses still dominates the first chapter. His name is mentioned ten times, Joshua's only four. Moses is called "the servant of the LORD" while Joshua is referred to as "Moses' assistant" (*Josh. 1:1, NKJV*). It will take a



lifetime of faithful service and obedience for Joshua to receive the title "servant of the LORD" (*Josh. 24:29, NKJV*).

Even if the first chapter of Joshua captures a transition between two great leaders of Israel, the most important character is the Lord Himself, whose words open the book and whose guidance dominates it. There are no questions as to who is the real leader of Israel.

**Throughout the ages, God has called men and women to lead His people. Why is it crucial to remember who the true, invisible leader of the church is?**

**MONDAY**

*September 29*

## **Cross! Take! Divide! Serve!**

Read Joshua 1. What can we learn about the structure of the book from this opening chapter?

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The first chapter of Joshua serves as an introduction to the whole book. It comprises four speeches that correspond to the four main sections of the book: crossing (*Josh. 1:2-9*); conquering (*Josh. 1:10, 11*); dividing the land (*Josh. 1:12-15*); and serving by obedience to the law (*Josh. 1:16-18*).

The book of Joshua can be seen as a series of divine initiatives. In each initiative, God gives a specific task to Joshua related to the conquest of Canaan, and each one

is acknowledged later in the book after its successful completion.

In the end, the promises of God concerning the occupation of the land would be fulfilled. From then on, the responsibility of keeping the land lay in the hands of the Israelites and could be accomplished only by true faith and by the obedience that such faith always engenders.

God's initiatives, expressed by the three verbs—"cross," "take," and "divide"—receive a proper answer in the people's obedience, which derives from the final initiative: service.

Again, the book of Joshua has four major sections, each characterized by a specific concept expressed through the dominating presence of a Hebrew word:

- (1) Cross (*Josh. 1:1-5:12*)
- (2) Take (*Josh. 5:13-12:24*)
- (3) Divide (*Josh. 13:1-21:45*)
- (4) Service (*Josh. 22:1-24:33*).

Thus, the structure of the book itself conveys its main message: God's initiatives are not accomplished automatically. Instead, they require the faithful response of His people. That is, with all that God has done for us—

including all that He has done for us that we cannot do for ourselves—we are then called to do what we can do for ourselves, which is to obey what God commands us to do. This is how it has always been in all of sacred history, and it remains so today. For example, the depiction of God's end-time people in Revelation 14:12 conveys the same idea: faith in what God has done for us, which leads to obedience.

**Think about some of the promises of God's Word that are most precious to you. What kind of response do they require on your part in order for them to become reality?**

**TUESDAY***September 30***Heirs of Promises**

In Joshua 1:2, 3, the Lord tells Joshua that He is giving the land to them. On the other hand, He said that He has already given it. What does that mean?

The land was a gift from the Lord, who was the real Owner. In Joshua 1:2, 3, two different forms of the verb "to give" are used, reflecting two significant aspects of inheriting the land. The first form expresses the process of giving the land. Only the Transjordan territories had been occupied by Israel. Most of the Promised Land had yet to be taken.

In Joshua 1:3 the verb is used in its perfect form, giving the impression that the land *had already been given* to them. When God is the subject of such actions, the form is called "the prophetic perfect." And that's because what He promises in His Word is an assured fact that can be trusted as present reality.

The pronouns in verse 3, "you" and "your," are plurals, so the promise is given not only to Joshua but to the entire people of Israel. The reference to the promise given to Moses conveys the continuity of God's cause.

Also, the word *kol*, "all," "every," is repeated numerous times in the first chapter. The pervasive presence of this noun expresses the totality and integrity that is crucial to attaining the objective set before Joshua. There has to be a perfect alignment between God, Joshua, and the people of Israel in order to assure success in the forthcoming conquest of the Promised Land.

**Read Joshua 1:4-6 and Hebrews 6:17, 18. At that moment, the Promised Land was exactly that, a promise. Yet, God calls it an inheritance. What does it mean to be the heirs of God's promises?**

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There is nothing magical about the promises of God. They don't have the power in and of themselves to secure their own fulfillment. The guarantee that they will come true lies in the presence of God, who says: "I will be with you." Indeed, the presence of the Lord was crucial for the survival of Israel. Without it, they would be only one among many nations, with no special call, identity, or mission (*Exod. 33:12-16*). The presence of the Lord was everything Joshua needed to succeed.

Nothing today has changed, which is why we have the promise of Jesus found in Matthew 28:20.

**WEDNESDAY**

*October 1*

## **Be Strong!**

Read Joshua 1:7-9. Why did the Lord need to emphasize twice to Joshua that he had to be strong and courageous?

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The task set before Joshua seemed to involve overwhelming challenges. The walls of the Canaanite cities appeared unassailable, and the population of the land was trained for battle. In contrast, the Israelites, simple nomads, did not possess even the most primitive war machines to take on the fortified walls. History tells us that not even Egypt, the superpower of those times, was able to gain a steady foothold in Canaan.

Yet the summon to be strong and courageous is not related here only to battle morale or to war strategies.



Courage and strength are needed to stay faithful to the Torah and its specific requirements, which defined Israel's covenant with Yahweh.

**Read Ephesians 6:10-18. Although we are not required today to participate in military combat, how can we apply the words of encouragement given to Joshua in our daily spiritual struggles?**

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Today, in fulfilling the mission entrusted to them by Christ, Christians face similar challenges to those of Joshua; that is, they are required to wage war against their own sinful tendencies, against the principalities, powers, and rulers of the darkness of this age, and against the hosts of wickedness. Like Joshua, they also have the assuring promise of Christ's presence: "I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (*Matt. 28:20, NKJV*). As the supporting presence of the Lord was enough to expel the

fears of Joshua, so it should be sufficient to banish our doubts and anxieties today.

The challenge for us is to know the Lord well enough to trust in Him and His promises to us. And that is why, more than anything else, we need that personal relationship with Him.

**The crucial question for us today is not different from that faced by Joshua. How can we stay true to what the Word of God says even when it is unpopular or inconvenient to do so?**

**THURSDAY**

*October 2*

## **Prosperous and Successful**

Read Joshua 1:7-9 together with Genesis 24:40, Isaiah 53:10, and Psalm 1:1-3. Based on these texts, what does it mean to be prosperous and successful?

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The Hebrew term *tsalakh*, "prosperous" (*Josh. 1:8*), implies the satisfactory accomplishment of what was planned, or a state of favorable circumstances.

The term *sakal*, "to be wise" (*Josh. 1:8*), can be translated as "prosper" or "be successful." But it can also mean "to be prudent," or "to act wisely." It occurs frequently in Job, Proverbs, and Psalms, where the notion of success is closely tied to acting wisely by fearing God and obeying His Word.

According to this insight, success is not necessarily defined as material prosperity, though it does not exclude it. Success has to be seen as a state of harmony with the spiritual values and principles that lie at the foundation of God's created world and that are expressed in His law.

Indeed, trust in God's promises, especially the promise of salvation by faith alone and obedience to His law, are not opposed to each other. They represent two sides of the same coin.

**Read Romans 3:31. What does this text say about the relationship between law and faith?**

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To pit faith in the atoning and sacrificial death of Jesus in our behalf against obedience to God's law is to set up a false and dangerous dichotomy. Law and grace always go together. Only a superficial understanding of the

role of the law can lead to perceiving "law" and "grace" as opposites.

The writers of the Old Testament had a high regard for the law and considered it a source of delight (*Ps. 1:2; Ps. 119:70, 77, 174*). Rightly regarded and used, the law will lead to a deeper understanding of one's own sinfulness (*Rom. 7:7*) and the need for Christ's righteousness (*Gal. 3:24*).

**However much by God's grace you seek to keep His law, how has your own experience shown you your need for Christ's covering righteousness?**

**FRIDAY**

October 3

**Further Thought:** Read Ellen G. White, "Crossing the Jordan," pp. 481, 482, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*; "Entering the Promised Land," p. 175, in *The Story of Redemption*.

"In His promises and warnings, Jesus means me. God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that I by believing in Him, might not perish, but have everlasting life. The experiences related in God's word are to be *my* experiences. Prayer and promise, precept and warning, are mine. . . . As faith thus receives and assimilates the principles of truth, they become a part of the being and the motive power of the life. The word of God, received into the soul, molds the thoughts, and enters into the development of character."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 390, 391.

“There is not a point that needs to be dwelt upon more earnestly, repeated more frequently, or established more firmly in the minds of all than the impossibility of fallen man meriting anything by his own best good works. Salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ alone.”—Ellen G. White, *Faith and Works*, p. 19.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. However different the circumstances of Joshua’s life and experiences are from ours, what spiritual principles can we take away from his life that we can apply to our own? Why, though, must we always keep context in mind when seeking to draw analogies?
2. Discuss the relationship between God’s promises and our obedience to Him. How do they complement one another? What are the dangers of overemphasizing one at the expense of the other? That is, what danger comes from pushing the law at the expense of eclipsing

grace? Or of pushing grace at the expense of eclipsing the law?

3. Based on this week's lesson, how would you define success from a biblical perspective? What place does prosperity have in a Christian definition of success?

4. Imagine how Joshua might have felt, following Moses. What promise did God give to him that surely sustained him (*see Josh. 1:5*) in his great responsibilities?



## Surprised by Grace

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### SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Josh. 2:1-21, Num. 14:1-12, Heb. 11:31, Exod. 12:13, Joshua 9, Neh. 7:25.*

**Memory Text:** "By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace" (*Hebrews 11:31, NKJV*).

**W**hy did I do this again?" Perhaps we all have uttered these words. After all, history not only repeats itself, but so does humanity in general, and we ourselves in particular. How often we repeat the same mistakes!

Israel has a second chance of entering the Promised Land, and Joshua takes this mission seriously. The first step is to have a clear understanding of what they face. He sends out two spies to bring him valuable information about the land: its defense system, military preparedness, water supplies, and the attitude of the population in the face of an invading force.

One would think that God's promise of giving the land to the Israelites did not require any effort from them. Yet the assurance of divine support does not override human responsibility. Israel stands at the border of Canaan for a second time. Expectations run high, but the last time Israel was at the border and had the same task, it resulted in an abysmal failure.

This week, we will explore two of the most fascinating stories of the book of Joshua and discover their relevance

to our faith today. God's grace has infinite possibilities to surprise us.

*\*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, October 11.*

**SUNDAY**

*October 5*

## **Second Chance**

Read Joshua 2:1, along with Numbers 13:1, 2, 25-28, 33; and Numbers 14:1-12. Why would Joshua start the mission of conquering the Promised Land by sending out spies?

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The place from which the two spies are sent out, Acacia Grove (NKJV), is called "Shittim" in the Hebrew text, and it reminds us of two negative episodes of Israel's history.

The first is another spy story (see Numbers 13) featuring the same essential elements: the commissioning of the spies; the secret incursion of the spies into enemy territory; the return of the spies; the report of the spies

on their findings; and the decision to act based on the report.

The other incident at Shittim represents one of the most defiant, idolatrous violations of the covenant by the Israelites, when, at the instigation of Balaam, they committed a debauchery with the Moabite women and worshiped their gods (*Num. 25:1-3, Num. 31:16*). In this context, the name Shittim creates an extraordinary tension as to the outcome of the whole story. Will it be another failure on the border of the Promised Land? Or will it lead to the long-awaited fulfillment of the ancient promise?

**Read John 18:16-18, 25-27, and John 21:15-19. What parallels do you discover between the second chance given to Israel as a nation and to Peter as a person?**

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God is a God of second chances (and more!). The Bible calls the second chance (and more!) "grace." Grace is

simply receiving what we don't deserve. The teaching of the Bible is replete with the concept of grace (*compare with Rom. 5:2, Eph. 2:8, Rom. 11:6*). God graciously offers everyone the possibility of a fresh start (*Titus 2:11-14*). Peter himself experienced this grace and urged the church to grow in grace (*2 Pet. 3:18*). And the news gets even better: we get much more than a second chance, don't we? (Where would we be if we didn't?)

**Think about the experience of the Israelites, when given a second chance to enter Canaan, and about the grace extended to Peter after he denied his Lord. What should these incidents teach us about how we should extend grace to those who need it?**

**MONDAY**

*October 6*

## Value in Unexpected Places

Read Joshua 2:2-11, Hebrews 11:31, and James 2:25.

What do these texts tell us about Rahab?

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Central to Rahab's story is the lie told to protect the spies. In considering her lie, we have to realize that she was embedded in a society that was extremely sinful, which finally led to God's decision to judge that society (*Gen. 15:16, Deut. 9:5, Lev. 18:25-28*). While it is true that the New Testament commends her faith, a careful analysis of the New Testament references to Rahab's act reveals that none endorse everything about her, and none validate her lie.

Hebrews 11:31 confirms her faith in casting her lot with the spies instead of choosing to hold on to a corrupt culture. James 2:25 commends her offer of lodging to the two Israelite spies and for giving them directions on how to return by a safe route. In the middle of a decadent, corrupt culture and Rahab's own sinful lifestyle, God, in His grace, saw a spark of faith through which He could save her. God used what was good in Rahab—which was manifest faith in Him and in her choice to belong to His people—but never commended everything she did. God valued Rahab for her exceptional courage, for her brave faith, for being an agent of salvation, and for choosing Israel's God.

After seeing what was happening, she declared "for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath" (*Josh. 2:11, NKJV*). It's significant to hear a Canaanite woman acknowledging that Yahweh is the only God, especially on a roof where, in her pagan religion, prayers were usually offered to what they believed were celestial deities.

The expression of Rahab is previously found only in the context of God's exclusive right to receive worship (*Exod. 20:4, Deut. 4:39, Deut. 5:8*). Her words bear witness



to a premeditated, conscientious choice to acknowledge that the God of the Israelites is the only true deity. Her confession demonstrates her understanding of the close relationship between God's sovereignty and the judgment under which Jericho is doomed.

Her moral choice recognizes that, in light of Yahweh's judgment, there were only two possibilities: to continue in rebellion against Him and be annihilated, or to choose to surrender in faith. By choosing the God of the Israelites, Rahab became an example of what could have been the destiny of all the inhabitants of Jericho had they turned to Israel's God for mercy.

**What does this story teach us about how God must have our ultimate allegiance?**

**TUESDAY**

October 7

## **New Allegiance**

Read Joshua 2:12-21 and Exodus 12:13, 22, 23. How do the texts in Exodus help you understand the agreement between the spies and Rahab?

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Rahab's deal is very clear: life for life and kindness for kindness. The word *chesed* (*Josh. 2:12*), "loving-kindness," has a richness of meaning that is difficult to express in one word in other languages. It refers primarily to covenantal loyalty, but it also carries the notion of faithfulness, mercy, benevolence, and kindness.

The words of Rahab are also reminiscent of Deuteronomy 7:12, where Yahweh Himself swore to keep His *chesed* toward Israel. "Then it shall come to pass, because you listen to  
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these judgments, and keep and do them, that the LORD your God will keep with you the covenant and the mercy [*chesed*] which He swore to your fathers" (*Deut. 7:12, NKJV*).

Interestingly enough, the same chapter (*Deuteronomy 7*) prescribes the ban (*cherem*) on the Canaanites. Here is Rahab, a Canaanite who is under the ban, and yet she claims, by her emerging faith, the promises that were given to the Israelites. As a result, she is saved.

The first image that inevitably comes to mind related to the conversation of the spies with Rahab is the Passover at the Exodus. There, in order for the Israelites to be protected, they had to stay inside their homes and mark the doorposts and lintels of their houses with the blood of the sacrificial lamb.

"Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt" (*Exod. 12:13, NKJV; see also Exod. 12:22, 23*).

"By obedience the people were to give evidence of their faith. So all who hope to be saved by the merits of the blood of Christ should realize that they themselves

have something to do in securing their salvation. While it is Christ only that can redeem us from the penalty of transgression, we are to turn from sin to obedience. Man is to be saved by faith, not by works; yet his faith must be shown by his works.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 279.

In that case, the blood was a sign that saved them from the destroying angel of God. As God spared the lives of the Israelites during the last plague in Egypt, the Israelites were to save Rahab and her family when destruction reached Jericho.

**What powerful gospel message can we find in these two stories? What gospel lessons can we take from them?**

**WEDNESDAY**

*October 8*

## Conflicting Values

Read Joshua 9:1-20. What are the similarities and differences between the story of Rahab and that of the Gibeonites? Why are they meaningful?

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This chapter of Joshua starts by informing us that five Canaanite kings who usually ruled over small city-states decided to create a coalition against the Israelites. By contrast, the inhabitants of Gibeon decided to establish a covenant with Israel.

In order to trick the Israelites into making a covenant with them, the Gibeonites resort to the scheme of being ambassadors from a foreign country. According to

Deuteronomy 20:10-18, God made a distinction between the Canaanites and people who lived outside the Promised Land.

The word translated as “craftily” or “cunningly” can be used with a positive meaning, denoting prudence and wisdom (*Prov. 1:4; Prov. 8:5, 12*), or negatively, implying criminal intent (*Exod. 21:14, 1 Sam. 23:22, Ps. 83:3*). In the case of the Gibeonites, behind their treacherous action lies a less-destructive intent of self-preservation.

The speech of the Gibeonites is strikingly similar to that of Rahab. Both acknowledge the power of Israel’s God, and both acknowledge that Israel’s success is not simply a human feat. In contrast to other Canaanites, they do not rebel against Yahweh’s plan to grant the land to the Israelites, and they admit that the Lord Himself is driving these nations out before Israel. The news of the deliverance from Egypt, and the victories over Sihon and Og, prompt both Rahab and the Gibeonites to seek an alliance with the Israelites. However, instead of fully acknowledging their willingness to surrender to the God of Israel, as Rahab does, the Gibeonites resort to a subterfuge.

The law of Moses made provisions for learning the will of God in cases such as this (*Num. 27:16-21*). Joshua should have inquired for the will of the Lord and avoided the deception of the Gibeonites.

The fundamental duty of a theocratic leader, and of any Christian leader, is to seek God's will (*1 Chron. 28:9, 2 Chron. 15:2, 2 Chron. 18:4, 2 Chron. 20:4*). By neglecting it, the Israelites were compelled either to violate the fundamental conditions of conquering the land or to break an oath made in the name of the Lord, which was equally binding.

**How often have you found yourself struggling between what appears to be two conflicting biblical values?**

**THURSDAY**

*October 9*

## Surprising Grace

Read Joshua 9:21-27. How did Joshua's solution combine justice with grace?

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Even if the people of Israel had wanted to attack the Gibeonites, they would not have been allowed to pursue it because of the oath sworn by the rulers of the congregation. The Israelite leaders acted according to the principle that an oath, as long as it does not involve wrongdoing or criminal intent (*Judg. 11:29-40*), is binding, even if it leads to one's personal hurt.

In the Old Testament, being prudent before making an oath, and the keeping of one's oath, are seen as virtues of the pious (*Ps. 15:4; Ps. 24:4; Eccl. 5:2, 6*). Because the

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oath was made in the name of the Lord, the God of Israel, the leaders could not change it.

With the solemn oath taken by the leaders of Israel, the destiny of Israel was indissolubly linked to that of the Gibeonites. In fact, through their designation as woodcutters and water carriers for the house of God (*Josh. 9:23*), the Gibeonites became part and parcel of Israel's worshiping community. Joshua's answer, in contrast to the verdict of the rulers of Israel, which decreed servitude for "all the congregation" (*Josh. 9:21, NKJV*), transformed the curse into a potential blessing for the Gibeonites (*compare with 2 Sam. 6:11*).

The subsequent history of Gibeon testifies to the high religious privileges the city enjoyed, as well as to their loyalty to God's people. The vow taken by Israel remained in place down through generations, so that when the Israelites returned from the Babylonian captivity, the Gibeonites were among those who helped rebuild Jerusalem (*Neh. 7:25*). Their actions will have eternally positive consequences but only because of God's grace.

What might have happened had the Gibeonites disclosed their identity and requested mercy as Rahab did? We don't

know, but we cannot rule out the possibility that even a consultation of God's will could have resulted in an exemption of the Gibeonites from destruction. God's ultimate purpose is not to punish sinners but to see them repent and to grant them His mercy (*compare with Ezek. 18:23 and Ezek. 33:11*). The subterfuge of the Gibeonites has to be perceived as an appeal to God's mercy, to His kind and just character. It was the Canaanites' refusal to repent and their defiance of God's purposes that led to the decision of their annihilation (*Gen. 15:16*). God honored the recognition of His supremacy by the Gibeonites, as well as their desire for peace rather than rebellion, and their willingness to give up idolatry and to worship the only true God.

**FRIDAY**

October 10

**Further Thought:** Read Ellen G. White, "Crossing the Jordan," pp. 482, 483, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

After this story of Rahab and the spies, the rest of the Old Testament is silent about her until she emerges again in the genealogy of Jesus. It is stated that she became the wife of Salmon, from the tribe of Judah, the ancestor of Boaz, and the mother-in-law of another remarkable woman mentioned in the same genealogy, Ruth (*Matt. 1:5; compare with Ruth 4:13, 21*). Through her faith in God, the prostitute of Jericho, condemned to total destruction, becomes a significant link in the royal line of David and a progenitor of the Messiah. This is what God is able to accomplish through faith, even if it might be only the size of a mustard seed (*Matt. 17:20, Luke 17:6*).

"And her [Rahab's] conversion was not an isolated case of God's mercy toward idolaters who acknowledged

His divine authority. In the midst of the land a numerous people—the Gibeonites—renounced their heathenism and united with Israel, sharing in the blessings of the covenant.

“No distinction on account of nationality, race, or caste, is recognized by God. He is the Maker of all mankind. All men are of one family by creation, and all are one through redemption. Christ came to demolish every wall of partition, to throw open every compartment of the temple courts, that every soul may have free access to God. His love is so broad, so deep, so full, that it penetrates everywhere. It lifts out of Satan’s influence those who have been deluded by his deceptions, and places them within reach of the throne of God, the throne encircled by the rainbow of promise. In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free.”—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 369, 370.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Discuss the whole question of “second chances” (and more) and how we are to extend them to others. At the

same time, how can we also be careful not to abuse this concept? Think, for example, about a woman in an abusive relationship, in which she is counseled to keep going back ("grace"), only in some cases for the abuse only to continue? How do we find the right balance here?

2. Discuss Rahab as a model of faith. How can we appreciate the openness of people to God even if their lifestyle is far from the biblical ideal? How is it possible to appreciate their faith while not condoning some of their practices?

3. Joshua managed to combine justice and grace in a practical way in order to solve the predicament caused by the deceit of the Gibeonites, and through his own negligence in not consulting the Lord. Think of a situation in your life that requires both justice and grace. What are some practical ways of merging the two?

## Memorials of Grace

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### SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Joshua 3, Num. 14:44, Luke 18:18-27, Joshua 4, John 14:26, Heb. 4:8-11.*

**Memory Text:** "For the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan for you until you passed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red Sea, which he dried up for us until we passed over, so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the LORD is mighty, that you may fear the LORD your God forever" (*Joshua 4:23, 24, ESV*).

**T**he police officer signaled. John had to pull over. The officer asked for his driver's license, and, at that moment, it dawned on John that he had left his wallet, with his driver's license, in the office. John explained what happened, and the officer asked about his job. John responded that he was a professor. As the officer gave John a ticket, he told him not to think of it as a fine.

"It's tuition," he said. "When people want to learn something, they pay tuition. This is your tuition to learn not to forget your license when driving. Have a good day, professor!"

As human beings, we are prone to forget things that are not constantly in our sight. We forget to return phone calls, respond to emails, water the plants, send birthday wishes, and so forth. The list could go on. Forgetting about our spiritual needs, however, could have more severe consequences than simply receiving a fine, especially because we are dealing with what is, literally, our eternal destiny.

Let's study the crossing of the Jordan by the Hebrews and see what we can learn from their experiences.

*\*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, October 18.*

**SUNDAY**

*October 12*

## **Crossing the Jordan**

**Read Joshua 3:1-5 and Numbers 14:41-44. Why did God ask the Israelites to specially prepare for what was about to happen?**

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This is the first time the ark of the covenant is mentioned in the book of Joshua. Until this point in the Old Testament narrative, the ark has appeared in the context of the sanctuary (*Exod. 40:21*); in Israel's journey from Sinai (*Num. 10:33-36*); and at the unsuccessful attempt

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to begin the conquest of Canaan (*Num. 14:44*). It was the most sacred object in the Israelite sanctuary and held three objects, each expressing Israel's special relationship with God: (1) the tablets containing the Ten Commandments; (2) the rod of Aaron, the high priest; and (3) a jar of manna (*Exod. 16:33; Heb. 9:4*).

The ark and the preparations to cross the Jordan reminded Israel that they were not entering Canaan in their own manner and time. The conquest would be successful only if they followed God's way and timing. God—who is described as enthroned above the cherubim that were covering the ark of the covenant (*Exod. 25:22, Num. 7:89*), and whose movements are identified with the ark's movements—enters Canaan in front of the Israelites as the One leading the conquest.

The term translated "sanctify" (*Josh 3:5*) or "consecrate" (*ESV*) refers to a purification process similar to what the priests followed before beginning their service in the sanctuary (*Exod. 28:41, Exod. 29:1*) and what the people of Israel carried out prior to God's revelation at Sinai (*Exod. 19:10, 14*). This consecration involved the laying aside of sin and the removal of all ritual

impurities. The same command appears in Numbers 11:18, relating to an impending miracle of God. Such a preparation was required also before battles were fought in a war (*Deut. 23:14*). Before God can fight for Israel in battle, they must show their allegiance to Him and trust in Him as their Commander.

The miracle of crossing the Jordan was going to prove to the Israelites that the Lord's promise to drive out these people in the land could be trusted. He who could secure a dry passage through the Jordan could also grant them the gift of the land.

**God does not always part the Jordan. His interventions are not always so obvious. How do you think we can develop the spiritual preparedness to experience and discern God's interventions on our behalf?**

**MONDAY**

October 13

## The Living God of Wonders

Read Joshua 3:6-17. What does the miraculous crossing of the Jordan tell us about the nature of the God whom we serve?

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The crossing of the Jordan River is described in Joshua 3:5 by the Hebrew word *niphla'ot*, "miracles, wonders," that usually refers to the mighty, supernatural acts of God and that demonstrate His uniqueness (*Ps. 72:18, Ps. 86:10*). Later, the Israelites meditated on these acts and, as a result, praised the Lord (*Ps. 9:1*) and proclaimed Him among the nations (*Ps. 96:3*). The plagues in Egypt (*Exod. 3:20, Mic. 7:15*), the crossing of the Red Sea, as

well as God's guidance in the wilderness (*Ps. 78:12-16*) were recounted as such wonders.

The authors of the Bible knew and testified to the fact that the God who created the world was never limited or constrained by His creation. Nothing is impossible (Heb. "too wonderful") for Him to accomplish (*Jer. 32:17*). His name and His nature are wonderful (*Judg. 13:18*), and He is beyond our comprehension.

In contrast with the gods of the other nations, who cannot save (*Ps. 96:5, Isa. 44:8*), the God of the Bible is a "living God," active and alive, whose followers can trust Him in anticipation of His interventions on their behalf.

The prophet Zechariah used the same term (from the same root as *niphla'ot*) as he envisioned a future for Israel after the Babylonian exile. He saw that Jerusalem would be fully rebuilt with old people sitting in the streets of the city, and boys and girls playing there. To the seemingly incredulous inhabitants of the capital still displaying the signs of its destruction, Zechariah declared: "Thus says the LORD of hosts: If it is marvelous in the sight of the remnant of this people in those days, should it also be marvelous in my sight, declares the LORD

of hosts? Thus says the LORD of hosts: Behold, I will save my people from the east country and from the west country, and I will bring them to dwell in the midst of Jerusalem" (*Zech. 8:6-8, ESV*).

**Read Luke 18:18-27. How does Jesus' answer to His disciples encourage you to trust God with what seems impossible?**

**TUESDAY**

October 14

**Remember**

Read Joshua 4. Why did God ask the Israelites to build a memorial?

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The purpose of these stones is to become a "sign." The Hebrew term *'ot* is often associated with the word "wonder" and can refer to miraculous acts done by God (see yesterday's study), such as the plagues on Egypt (*Exod. 7:3, Deut. 4:34*). It can also carry the meaning of "symbol" or "token," as an outward sign of a deeper or transcendent reality. For example, the rainbow is a "sign" of the covenant (*Gen. 9:12, 13*); the blood on the doorposts and lintels of the Israelite houses is also called a "sign" (*Exod. 12:13*); and most significantly the Sabbath is a

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“sign” of Creation and of God’s sanctifying presence (*Exod. 31:13, 17; Ezek. 20:12*).

Here, the sign functions as a memorial, reminding each subsequent generation of the miracle of the crossing. The term memorial (*zikkaron*) comes from the word *zakar*, “to remember,” which denotes more than a passive act of recalling something. It implies a remembering followed by a proper action (*Deut. 5:15, Deut. 8:2*). The setting up of stone memorials (*Gen. 28:18-22*) and rituals that triggered questions (*Exod. 12:26, 27; Deut. 6:20-25*) was common in the Old Testament. Instead of repeating the miracles again and again, God establishes monuments that evoke the memory of His great acts and prompt meaningful answers. Therefore, the sign is to be there “forever,” implying the need to keep this miracle of the Lord in the collective memory of His people perpetually.

The potential question of future generations is significant because it is formulated in a personal way: “What are these stones to you?” Each new generation must internalize and understand the meaning of these stones for themselves personally. The faith in a miracle-making God can be kept alive only if each generation rediscovers the

significance of the mighty acts of Yahweh for themselves. Such a faith will make a major difference between living out faithfully Bible-based *traditions*, and *traditionalism*, the dead religion of the living generation deprived of its original value and fervor. In the end, we need to make our Bible-based faith our own. No one, especially our ancestors, can believe for us.

**What are some of the memorials, personal memorials, from your own walk with the Lord that help you remember what He has done for you?**



**WEDNESDAY**

*October 15*

## **Forgetfulness**

**Read Joshua 4:20-24 in the light of the following verses:** *Judg. 3:7; Judg. 8:34; Ps. 78:11; Deut. 8:2, 18; Ps. 45:17.* **Why was it so important to remember the mighty deeds of the Lord?**

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Notice the change in person in Joshua 4:23. The waters of the Jordan are referred to as having been dried up before "you," that is, before all the Israelites who have just crossed the Jordan. In contrast, the Red Sea is said to had been dried up before "us," those who were still present from the first generation and who experienced the Exodus. The two events experienced by two different generations were similar in significance, which enabled the

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second generation, through the testimony of their parents, to rediscover the same meaning of the Jordan crossing for themselves.

Generally, we perceive forgetfulness as a normal trait of all human beings. However, forgetfulness in the spiritual sense can lead to serious consequences.

Even today, if we want to maintain our identity as a people with a peculiar calling and mission, we will have to create occasions for refreshing both our individual and corporate spiritual memory in order to keep in focus where we are coming from, who we are, and what we are here for.

**Read 1 Corinthians 11:24, 25 and John 14:26. Why must we always remember what Christ did for us? What else really matters without it?**

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Ellen G. White clearly understood that without constantly guiding ourselves in the light of God's past

acts and revelation, we will surely lose the motivation to carry out our mission in the future: "We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history."—  
Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches*, p. 196.

**Though important to remember the past and how the Lord has worked in your life, why must you day by day have an experience with Him and the reality of His love and presence now?**

**THURSDAY**

*October 16*

## **Beyond the Jordan**

**"He turned the sea into dry land;**

**They went through the river on foot.**

**There we will rejoice in Him" (*Ps. 66:6, NKJV*).**

Both the crossing of the Red Sea and of the Jordan are markers of a new era in biblical history, and both carry symbolic significance (see *Ps. 66:6, Ps. 114:1-7, and 2 Kings 2:6-15*). Already in the Old Testament there are texts that link the two crossing events and recognize a meaning, which points beyond the original settings. In Psalm 66:6, the psalmist celebrated God's redemptive act in his life (*Ps. 66:16-19*) by referring to the historical examples of the crossing of the Red Sea and of the Jordan.

Psalm 114 also ties the two events together, not because the author did not see a chronological difference between them, but because of the theological significance

that the two crossings share. Thus, both events are seen as contributing to a change in Israel's status, once from slavery to freedom, then from nomadic landlessness to nationhood. In these psalms, the examples of the two crossings illustrate the change in status of the author from oppression, poverty, helplessness, and humiliation to safety, well-being, salvation, and dignity.

It is also by the Jordan that Elijah's translation takes place in the context of a similar miracle to the one recorded in Joshua. For Elijah, the crossing brought the most significant status change in his life: he was taken to heaven. For Elisha, the change is also important: the prophet's assistant (*1 Kings 19:21*) becomes the prophet of the nation (*2 Kings 2:22*).

**Read Matthew 3:16, 17 and Mark 1:9. How do the writers of the New Testament imply a symbolic, spiritual meaning of the Jordan River?**

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The earthly ministry of Jesus, as the Representative of Israel, follows the pattern of the history of ancient Israel. Jesus undergoes the "Red Sea" and "Jordan" experiences. He is called out of Egypt after a death decree (*Matt. 2:14-16*), spends 40 days in the wilderness (*Matt. 4:2*) similar to ancient Israel's 40 years, and, as a transition from His private life to His public ministry, He is baptized in the Jordan (*Matt. 3:16, 17; Mark 1:9*).

Later, Hebrews 3-4 recognizes the symbolic significance of the crossing of the Jordan and presents the entrance into Canaan as foreshadowing the "rest of grace" Christians enter through faith.

**FRIDAY**

October 17

**Further Thought:** Read Ellen G. White, "Crossing the Jordan," pp. 483, 484, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

"Study carefully the experiences of Israel in their travels to Canaan. Study the third and fourth chapters of Joshua, recording their preparation for and passage over the Jordan into the promised land. We need to keep the heart and mind in training, by refreshing the memory with the lessons that the Lord taught His ancient people. Then to us, as He designed it should be to them, the teachings of His Word will ever be interesting and impressive."—Ellen G. White *Comments, The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 2, p. 994.*

"Modern Israel are in greater danger of forgetting God and being led into idolatry than were His ancient people. Many idols are worshiped, even by professed Sabbathkeepers. God especially charged His ancient people to guard against idolatry, for if they

should be led away from serving the living God, His curse would rest upon them, while if they would love Him with all their heart, with all their soul, and with all their might, He would abundantly bless them in basket and in store, and would remove sickness from the midst of them."—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 609.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Discuss in your class the miraculous crossing of the Jordan. How would you define miracles? Why does it seem that God is not performing similar miracles today?
2. What practical ways can you suggest in your class for preventing spiritual forgetfulness, both as individuals or as a church? While it is important that we have an ongoing dynamic relationship with God, and that we don't build our whole Christian experience on powerful past experiences, how can we still use our past experiences as reminders of how God has worked in our lives?



3. How do you think the Sabbath can, on the one hand, help us remember God's interventions in our lives, and, on the other, give us a foretaste of the promised rest in His kingdom? How does the Sabbath point not only to what we are supposed to remember but to what we can hope for in the future?

# The Conflict Behind All Conflicts

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## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Josh. 5:13-15; Isa. 37:16; Rev. 12:7-9; Deut. 32:17; Exod. 14:13, 14; Josh. 6:15-20.*

**Memory Text:** "There has been no day like it before or since, when the LORD heeded the voice of a man, for the LORD fought for Israel" (*Joshua 10:14, ESV*).

**R**eading the pages of Joshua, we are confronted with the aggressive military campaigns carried out at the command of God, in the name of God, and with the help of God. The idea that God was behind the conquest of Canaan pervades the book of Joshua, and it is expressed in the assertions of the narrator (*Josh. 10:10, 11*) in God's own words (*Josh. 6:2, Josh. 8:1*), in Joshua's addresses (*Josh. 4:23, 24; Josh. 8:7*), by Rahab (*Josh. 2:10*), by the spies (*Josh. 2:24*), and by the people (*Josh. 24:18*). God claims to be the initiator of these violent conflicts.

This reality raises unavoidable questions. How can we understand that God's chosen people carried out such practices in Old Testament times? How is it possible to reconcile the image of a "warlike" God with His character of love (*for example, Exod. 34:6, Ps. 86:15, Ps. 103:8, Ps. 108:4*) without diluting the credibility, authority, and historicity of the Old Testament?

This week and next, we are going to explore the difficult question of divinely commanded wars in the book of Joshua and elsewhere.

*\*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, October 25.*

**SUNDAY**

*October 19*

## **Commander of the Army of the Lord**

**Read Joshua 5:13-15. What does this text say about the background of Canaan's conquest?**

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Israel has just crossed the Jordan and stepped onto the enemy's ground. The fortress of Jericho lies in front of them, its gates firmly shut (*Josh. 6:1*). At this point, the people are unaware of any battle strategy. What is even more concerning, Israel has only slings, spears, and arrows to take on a city fortified to withstand a long siege.

Joshua's questions regarding the identity of the strange visitor receive a rather obscure answer: "No." The visitor's answer reveals that He is unwilling to step into the categories defined by Joshua. In other words, the

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ultimate question is not whether He is on Joshua's side; rather, is Joshua on His side?

**Compare Joshua 5:14, 15 with 2 Kings 6:8-17, Nehemiah 9:6, and Isaiah 37:16. What do you learn about the identity of the commander of the Lord's army?**

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While the expression "commander of the army of the LORD" is unique in the Hebrew Bible, the combination of the terms "commander" and "hosts" always refers to a military leader. The word "host" in Scripture can refer to military troops, to the angels, or to celestial bodies.

The pre-incarnate Christ appears to Joshua not merely as an ally, nor even as the true Commander of Israel's army, but as the Commander of the unseen yet real army of angels involved in a far greater conflict than that of Joshua with the Canaanites. Joshua's answer clearly indicates his understanding of the Commander's identity. He

is equal to God, and Joshua falls prostrate in front of Him as a sign of profound respect and worship (*Josh. 5:14, Gen. 17:3, 2 Sam. 9:6, 2 Chron. 20:18*). Joshua is ready to receive the battle strategy for a military campaign that is an intrinsic part of a far greater conflict in which the God of Hosts Himself is involved.

**What comfort can, and should, we draw, knowing the "Commander of the army of the LORD" is at work in defense of His people?**

**MONDAY**

*October 20*

## **War in Heaven**

Joshua understood that the battle was part of a larger conflict. What do we know about the conflict in which God Himself was involved? Read Rev. 12:7-9, Isa. 14:12-14, Ezek. 28:11-19, and Dan. 10:12-14.

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God populated the universe with responsible creatures to whom He gave free will, a prerequisite for them being able to love. They can choose to act in accordance with, or against, God's will. One of the most powerful angels, Lucifer, rebelled against God, and took a lot of angels with him.

Isaiah and Ezekiel refer to the conflict, although some commentators try to restrict the meaning of Isaiah 14

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and Ezekiel 28 to the king of Babylon and to a ruler in Tyre. However, there are clear indicators in the biblical text that point to a transcendent reality. The king of Babylon is presented to have been in heaven at the throne of God (*Isa. 14:12, 13*), and the king of Tyre is said to have resided in Eden as a protective cherub on God's holy mountain (*Ezek. 28:12-15*). None of this is true about the kings of Babylon and Tyre.

Neither can it be said about the earthly kings that they were blameless and the "signet ring of perfection." Consequently, these characters point beyond the literal kingdoms of Babylon and Tyre.

Isaiah presents a "parable" (Heb. *mashal*), which conveys a meaning beyond the immediate historical context. In this case, the king of Babylon becomes a paradigm of rebellion, self-sufficiency, and pride. Similarly, Ezekiel makes a distinction between the prince of Tyre (*Ezek. 28:2*) and the king of Tyre (*Ezek. 28:11, 12*), where the prince, being active in the earthly realm, becomes the symbol of a king who acts in the heavenly one.

According to Daniel 10:12-14, these rebellious heavenly beings obstruct the fulfillment of God's purposes

on earth. It is in light of this connection between heaven and earth that we have to understand the divinely sanctioned wars of Israel. We need to recognize them as earthly manifestations of the great conflict between God and Satan, and between good and evil—all ultimately with the purpose of restoring God's justice and love in a fallen world.

**What are ways we see, in the world around us and in our own lives, the reality of this cosmic battle between good and evil?**

**TUESDAY**

*October 21*

## **The Lord Is a Warrior**

Read Exodus 2:23-25; Exodus 12:12, 13; and Exodus 15:3-11. What does it mean that God is a warrior?

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During their long sojourn in Egypt, the Israelites have forgotten the true God of their ancestors. As many episodes of their travels through the wilderness demonstrated, their knowledge of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob faded, and they had mixed pagan elements into their religious practices (*compare with Exod. 32:1-4*). Under the oppression of the Egyptians, they cried to the Lord (*Exod. 2:23-25*), and at the right time, the Lord intervened on their behalf.

However, the conflict described in the first 12 chapters of Exodus was greater than a simple power struggle between Moses and the pharaoh. According to ancient Near Eastern war ideology, conflicts between peoples were ultimately considered as being conflicts between the respective god or gods. Exodus 12:12 declares that the Lord inflicted judgment, not only on the pharaoh, but also on the gods of Egypt, those powerful demons (*Lev. 17:7, Deut. 32:17*) that stood behind the oppressive power and unjust social system of Egypt.

Ultimately, God is at war with sin and will not tolerate this conflict forever (*Ps. 24:8, Rev. 19:11, Rev. 20:1-4, 14*). All the fallen angels, as well as the human beings who have definitely and irrecoverably identified themselves with sin, will be destroyed. In light of this, the battles against the inhabitants of the land have to be perceived as an earlier stage of this conflict, which will reach its apex on the cross, and its consummation at the final judgment, when God's justice and character of love will be vindicated.

The concept of the total destruction of the Canaanites must be understood on the basis of the biblical worldview,

in which God is involved in a cosmic conflict with the exponents of evil in the universe. What is ultimately at stake are God's reputation and His character (*Rom. 3:4, Rev. 15:3*).

Since sin has entered human existence, nobody can stand on neutral ground. One must be either on God's side or on the side of evil. Hence, with this background in mind, the eradication of the Canaanites should be viewed as a preview of the final judgment.

**The reality of the great controversy allows for only one of two sides. How do you know which side you are really on?**

**WEDNESDAY**

*October 22*

## **The Lord Will Fight for You**

According to Exodus 14:13, 14, 25, what was God's original and ideal plan concerning the involvement of the Israelites in warfare?

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In that moment of crisis, when the people of Israel were forced into a physical impasse, "Moses answered the people, 'Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still' " (*Exod. 14:13, 14, NIV*). According to the biblical narrative, even the Egyptians themselves understood that reality: "Let us flee from the

face of Israel, for the LORD fights for them against the Egyptians" (*Exod. 14:25, NKJV*).

God's miraculous intervention for the helpless Israelites, untrained in military skills, becomes the pattern. The Exodus constituted the model, the paradigm for God's intervention on behalf of Israel. Here not only is the battle fought by Yahweh, but Israel is required not to fight (*Exod. 14:14*). God is the warrior; the initiative belongs to Him. He establishes the strategy, defines the means, and conducts the campaign. If Yahweh does not fight for Israel, they have no possibility of success.

Ellen G. White interprets this as an expression of the fact that God "did not design that they should gain the land of promise by warfare, but through submission and unqualified obedience to his commands."—Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, September 2, 1880. As in their deliverance from Egypt, God would fight their battles for them. All they had to do was stand still and witness His mighty intervention.

History demonstrates that whenever Israel had sufficient trust in God, they did not need to fight (*see 2 Kings 19, 2 Chronicles 32, Isaiah 37*).

In God's ideal plan, Israel never needed to fight for themselves. It was a consequence of their unbelief, expressed after the Exodus, that God permitted them to have a part in the war conducted against the Canaanites. In the same way, they did not need to raise a single sword against the Egyptians during the Exodus; it would have never been necessary for them to fight in conquering Canaan (*Deut. 7:17-19*).

**"If the children of Israel had not murmured against the Lord, He would not have suffered their enemies to make war with them."**—Ellen G. White, *The Story of Redemption*, p. 134. **How might murmurings impact our lives today?**



**THURSDAY**

*October 23*

## The Second-Best Option

Read Exodus 17:7-13 and Joshua 6:15-20. What similarities do you find between these two war narratives? How do they differ?

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The first time Israel fought after the Exodus is recorded in Exodus 17, where the Israelites defended themselves against the Amalekites. Israel had witnessed God's almighty power in both afflicting the Egyptians and leading the Israelites to freedom. We have seen that God's initial plan for Israel did not include fighting against other people (*Exod. 23:28, Exod. 33:2*). But shortly after their deliverance from Egypt, the Israelites started to

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murmur on the way (*Exod. 17:3*), even questioning God's presence in their midst. It was at this moment that Amalek came to fight against Israel. This was not by chance. God allowed the Amalekites to attack Israel so that they might learn to trust Him again.

Without compromising His principles, God comes down to the level where His people are, continually calling them back to the ideal plan: complete and unreserved trust in divine intervention. In fact, the law of warfare (*Deuteronomy 20*) was given only after the 40 years of wilderness experience, which was also caused by Israel's unbelief. New circumstances demanded new strategies, and it was only then that God required Israel to completely annihilate the Canaanites (*Deut. 20:16-18*).

Besides the reality that war became a necessity for Israel, it also turned out to be a test of their allegiance to Yahweh. God did not give up on them but allowed them to witness His power by experiencing total dependence on Him.

The participation of the Israelites in the conquest is evident from the conclusion drawn by Joshua at the end of the book. Here the Canaanites are said to have been fighting against the Israelites (*Josh. 24:11*). While the

collapse of the walls of Jericho was the result of a divine miracle, the people of Israel had to be actively involved in the battle and face the stubborn resistance of the city's inhabitants.

Israel's participation in armed conflict became a way to develop unconditional trust in Yahweh's help. Yet Israel was always reminded (*Josh. 7:12, 13; Josh. 10:8*) that the outcome of each battle ultimately lay in the Lord's hands, and the only way they could influence the outcome of a military conflict was through their attitude of faith, or unbelief, toward the promises of the Lord. The choice was their own.

**FRIDAY**

October 24

**Further Thought:** Read Ellen G. White, "The Fall of Jericho," pp. 487-493, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

When rebellion against God's authority arose in the universe, either God was going to cease to be what He essentially, immutably, and eternally is, and give away the leadership of the whole universe to one of His rebellious creatures, or He was going to be the holy, righteous, loving, and merciful Father of all that exists. The Bible presents the second picture and, in this case, the clash between the forces of evil and His power is inevitable.

When political or socio-historical powers associated with chaotic and rebellious cosmic forces manifested the same defiant attitude against Yahweh, He, as the Sovereign Lord of the universe, intervened. The motif of Yahweh as a warrior becomes a pre-figuration of that ultimate victory, which will finally put an end to the ongoing cosmic conflict

between good and evil (Rev. 20:8-10). Moreover, Israel's divine wars not only reflect a glimpse of the cosmic conflict as in a mirror but are part and parcel of the same controversy, anticipating God's end-time judgment in the sphere of present history.

"God had made it their privilege and their duty to enter the land at the time of His appointment, but through their willful neglect that permission had been withdrawn. . . . It was not His purpose that they should gain the land by warfare, but by strict obedience to His commands."—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 392.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. How does the cosmic conflict background help you better understand the Lord commanding Israel to go to war?
2. In class, discuss your answers to Monday's question regarding the reality of the great controversy and how it plays out in the world around us. What is our role in this controversy, and how do we seek to fulfill it?

3. How can we apply the principle of standing still and waiting for the Lord to fight for us in our spiritual life?

4. Many times, in our discussions and occasional disagreements in the church, we want to see who is on our side. How should we change our attitude in light of Joshua 5:13-15?

## God Fights *for* You

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### SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Gen. 15:16; Lev. 18:24-30;*

*2 Tim. 4:1, 8; Exod. 23:28-30; Deut. 20:10, 15-18;*

*Isa. 9:6.*

**Memory Text:** "And Joshua captured all these kings and their land at one time, because the LORD God of Israel fought for Israel" (*Joshua 10:42, ESV*).

**T**he book of Joshua contains some disturbing scenes. Serious questions are raised by the concept of a *divine or holy war* portraying a group of people with a God-given mandate to destroy another group.

The issue of divine war in the Old Testament is challenging. God appears in the Old Testament as the sovereign Lord of the universe; therefore, everything that happens must, somehow, be related to His direct or indirect will. So, the question "How can God allow such things?" becomes inevitable. Last week, we saw that God Himself is involved in a conflict that is far greater than any war or battle fought in human history, a battle that permeates every aspect of our lives. We saw, too, that the events of both biblical and secular history can be fully understood only in light of this conflict.

This week, we continue to explore the complexity of divinely sanctioned wars, the limitations and conditions of divine war, the final vision of peace offered by the Old Testament prophets, and the spiritual implications of such wars.



*\*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, November 1.*

**SUNDAY**

*October 26*

## **The Canaanites' Iniquity**

Read Genesis 15:16, Leviticus 18:24-30, Deuteronomy 18:9-14, and Ezra 9:11. What are these texts telling us about God's larger plan in offering the land of Canaan to the Israelites?

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We need to look beyond the book of Joshua to completely understand what was meant by the iniquity of the nations inhabiting Canaan. These nations' abhorrent practices of child sacrifice, divination, sorcery, witchcraft, necromancy, and spiritualism give us a hint (*Deut. 18:9-12*).

The discovery of the ancient Ugaritic texts (from Ras Shamra) provides more insight into the Canaanite religion

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and society, and they demonstrate that condemnation of this culture was not only understandable but—according to Old Testament moral standards—also justified.

The Canaanite religion was based on the belief that natural phenomena, which assured fertility, were controlled by the sexual relationships between gods and goddesses. Thus, they envisioned the sexual activity of the deities in terms of their own sexual behavior and engaged in ritual sexual practices in order to incite the gods and goddesses to do likewise. This concept resulted in the institution of “sacred” prostitution, involving both male and female prostitutes engaging in orgiastic rites, again all as part of their own religious practices!

A nation cannot rise to a moral ground that is higher than that of the gods its people worship. As a result of such an understanding of their deities, it is no wonder the Canaanites’ religious practices included child sacrifice, which the Bible warned specifically against.

Archaeological evidence confirms that the inhabitants of Canaan regularly sacrificed their firstborn children to the gods, really demons, whom they worshiped. Little skeletons found crushed into large jars with votive

inscriptions testify to their degrading religion and what it meant for many of their children.

The eradication of the Canaanites, then, was not an afterthought, something that emerged in the wake of God's decision to give the land of Canaan to the Israelites. The inhabitants of Canaan were granted a time of probation, a time of additional mercy during which they had the opportunity to discover God and His character through the witness of the patriarchs living among them. They had the chance, but obviously, they squandered it, and continued in their horrific practices until the Lord finally had to put a stop to them.

**MONDAY**

*October 27*

## The Supreme Judge

Read Genesis 18:25; Psalm 7:11; Psalm 50:6; Psalm 82:1; Psalm 96:10; and 2 Timothy 4:1, 8. What are these verses saying about God's moral character? How does the role of God as the judge of the universe help us understand the question of divine war?

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The holiness of God's character means that He cannot tolerate sin. He is patient. However, sin must reap its final consequence, which is death (*Rom. 6:23*). Yahweh declared war against sin, regardless of where it was found, whether in Israel or among the Canaanites. Israel was not sanctified through participating in holy wars any more than

other nations were (*Deut. 9:4, 5; Deut. 12:29, 30*) even when they became the means of Yahweh's judgment against His chosen nation. Different from other ancient Near Eastern people, the Israelites experienced the reversal of holy war, when God did not fight for them but *against* them, allowing their enemies to oppress them (*compare with Joshua 7*).

The whole concept of holy war can be understood only if it is seen in the light of God's activity as judge. When seen this way, Israel's wars of conquest take on a completely different character. In contrast to the imperialistic wars of self-aggrandizement, so common in the ancient world (and ours today), Israel's wars were not meant to accomplish glory for themselves but to establish God's justice and peace in the land. Therefore, at the heart of understanding the concept of holy war stands the concept of God's rule and sovereignty, which are at stake in the imagery of God as warrior, just as they are in the imagery of God as king or as judge.

Yahweh as warrior is the One who, as a judge, is committed to implementing, stabilizing, and maintaining the rule of the law, which is the reflection of His character.

The image of God as warrior, similar to that of judge and king, asserts that Yahweh will not tolerate rebellion against His established order forever. Therefore, one can affirm that the goal of Yahweh's activity is never war itself, or victory itself, but the reestablishment of justice and peace. Ultimately, to judge and to wage war, or to deliver justice, are the same thing if God is the subject of the action.

**Reflect on God as a righteous judge who cannot be bribed nor influenced by partiality. How is a God who will not endlessly tolerate sin, oppression, the suffering of the innocent, and the exploitation of the oppressed part and parcel of the gospel?**

**TUESDAY**

*October 28*

## **Dispossession or Annihilation?**

Compare Exodus 23:28-30; Exodus 33:2; Exodus 34:11; Numbers 33:52; and Deuteronomy 7:20 with Exodus 34:13; Deuteronomy 7:5; Deuteronomy 9:3; Deuteronomy 12:2, 3; and Deuteronomy 31:3, 4. What do these texts reveal about the purpose of the conquest and the extent of the destruction?

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God's original purpose for the Canaanites was not annihilation but, instead, dispossession. An examination of the passages that describe the way Israel had to be involved in the battles of the conquest used terms that speak about the dispossession, ejection, and dissipation carried out against the inhabitants of the Promised Land. The second group of terms that express destruction and have

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Israel as the subject of the action refer mostly to inanimate objects, such as articles of pagan worship and objects devoted to destruction. Evidently the places of pagan worship and the altars constituted the main centers of the Canaanite religion.

Holy war is mainly oriented toward Canaan's corrupt culture and society. In order to avoid contamination, Israel had to destroy all the elements that were propagating corruption. However, all the inhabitants of Canaan, and those who, on an individual basis, recognized God's sovereignty prior to the conquest, or even during the conquest, were able to escape through immigration (*Josh. 2:9-14; compare with Judg. 1:24-26*). The only part of the Canaanite population doomed to destruction were those who withdrew into the fortified cities, obstinately continued to rebel against God's plan for the Israelites, and hardened their hearts (*Josh. 11:19, 20*).

However, this does raise a question: if the initial purpose of conquering Canaan was to drive out the inhabitants of the land and not to annihilate them, why did the Israelites have to kill so many people?

Analysis of the biblical texts related to the conquest of Canaan revealed that the original intent of the conquest implied the dissipation of the Canaanite population.

However, the majority of the Canaanites, like the pharaoh of Egypt, hardened their hearts and, as such, became one with the culture to such an extent that the destruction of their culture meant they had to be destroyed as well.

**What elements in your own character and habits must be uprooted and annihilated?**

**WEDNESDAY**

*October 29*

**Free Choice**

Read Deuteronomy 20:10, 15-18; Deuteronomy 13:12-18; and Joshua 10:40. How does the law of warfare and the procedure against an idolatrous town in Israel, expressed in Deuteronomy, help us understand the limitations of total destruction in the war that the Israelites were engaged in?

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The Hebrew text uses a unique term to describe the destruction of people in war: *cherem*. This term refers to what is "banned," "damned," or "dedicated to annihilation." Most of the time, it designates complete and irrevocable placement of people, animals, or inanimate objects in God's exclusive domain, which in warfare involved, in most cases, their destruction. The concept and practice of *cherem* as a

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total eradication of a people in war needs to be understood in the light of Yahweh's conflict with the cosmic forces of evil, where His character and reputation are at stake.

Again, since the emergence of sin in the world, there is no neutrality: one is either on God's side or against Him. One side leads to life, eternal life, and the other to death, eternal death.

The practice of total destruction describes God's righteous judgment against sin and evil. God uniquely delegated the execution of part of His judgment to His chosen nation, ancient Israel. The devotion to destruction was under His tight theocratic control, limited to a certain period of history, the conquest, and to a well-defined geographical area, ancient Canaan. As we saw in yesterday's study, those who came under the ban of destruction consistently rebelled against God's purposes and defied them, never repenting either. Therefore, God's decision to destroy them was neither arbitrary nor nationalistic.

Moreover, Israel would expect the same treatment if they decided to adopt the same lifestyle as the Canaanites (*compare with Deuteronomy 13*). Even if it seems as though

the groups situated on either side of the divine war are pre-defined (the Israelites are to inherit the land and the Canaanites are to be destroyed), there is the possibility to move from one side to the other, as we will see in the cases of Rahab, Achan, and the Gibeonites.

People were not arbitrarily given protection or placed under a ban. Those who benefited from a relationship with Yahweh could lose their privileged status through rebellion, and those under the ban could submit to the authority of Yahweh and live.

**What are the spiritual implications of the Canaanites' defiance of God for our context today? That is, what are the consequences of our free choices for us personally?**

**THURSDAY**

*October 30*

## The Prince of Peace

How do the following texts describe the future that God had envisioned for His people? *Isa. 9:6, Isa. 11:1-5, Isa. 60:17, Hos. 2:18, Mic. 4:3.*

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Although the main focus of this week's lesson has constituted the divinely commanded and assisted wars of the Old Testament, we need to mention the presence of another equally significant theme of the Old Testament's prophetic writings: the future vision of the peaceful Messianic era. The Messiah is depicted as the "Prince of Peace" (*Isa. 9:6*). He will usher in a kingdom dominated by peace, where the lion and the lamb will graze together (*Isa. 11:1-8*), in

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which there will be no destruction or hurt (*Isa. 11:9*), and where peace will rule (*Isa. 60:17*) and flow like a river (*Isa. 66:12*).

**Read 2 Kings 6:16-23. What insights does this story provide into the deeper purposes of God for His people and humanity?**

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Consider the story of the feeding of the Syrian army at the initiative of Elisha. Instead of massacring them (*2 Kings 6:22*), he showcased to them the supreme ideal, peace, which has always been God's desire for His people. It is interesting to observe that Elisha is fully aware of the superiority of the invisible army that surrounds the enemy (*2 Kings 6:17*). As much as God is involved in a cosmic conflict that has also affected our planet, the final goal of redemption is not a perpetual conflict or

even an eternal subjugation of the enemy in a state of slavery, but instead, everlasting peace. As violence breeds violence (*Matt. 26:52*), peace engenders peace. The story concludes by stating that the "Syrians did not come again on raids into the land of Israel" (*2 Kings 6:23, ESV*).

**Think about all the ways we can, by seeking to emulate Jesus, be agents of peace. What about your own life right now? In what ways, in whatever conflict you might be facing, could you be an agent of peace instead of conflict?**



**FRIDAY**

*October 31*

**Further Thought:** Read Ellen G. White, "The Fall of Jericho," pp. 491-493, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

As with everything in the Bible, knowing the context and the background is crucial. As we have seen, the cosmic conflict and the motif of God as Judge are crucial in understanding these wars against the Canaanites.

"God is slow to anger. He gave the wicked nations a time of probation that they might become acquainted with Him and His character. According to the light given was their condemnation for refusing to receive the light and choosing their own ways rather than God's ways. God gave the reason why He did not at once dispossess the Canaanites. The iniquity of the Amorites was not full. Through their iniquity they were gradually bringing themselves to the point where God's forbearance could no longer be exercised and they would be exterminated. Until the point was

reached and their iniquity was full, the vengeance of God would be delayed. All nations had a period of probation. Those who made void God's law would advance from one degree of wickedness to another. Children would inherit the rebellious spirit of their parents and do worse than their fathers before them until God's wrath would fall upon them. The punishment was not less because deferred."—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, p. 1005.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Discuss the implications of God being our judge as well as the Supreme Judge of the universe. Why do you think the fact that God is the Judge is foundational to the gospel and to our salvation?
2. How does the case of the Canaanites offer us a window into God's patience and justice? How could we reflect God's character in the way we deal with our fellow human beings?

3. Think about the fundamental nature of free will.

Why do you think God respects our freedom of choice?

How are love and freedom of choice related to each another?

4. The Old Testament contains many stories of war and conflict, but ultimately, it forecasts a vision of peace. What role should Christians play in establishing peace in their environment?

# The Enemy Within

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## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *1 Pet. 1:4, Joshua 7, Ps.*

*139:1-16, Ezra 10:11, Luke 12:15, Josh. 8:1-29.*

**Memory Text:** "I the LORD search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds" (*Jeremiah 17:10, ESV*).

**J**oshua 7 is the first instance where, through a tragic experience, the people of Israel learned the far-reaching consequences of the covenant and its deep meaning. While obedience to the stipulations of the covenant secured victory, disregarding the terms of the covenant brought defeat. Israel's military success depended not on their numbers, battle strategy, or clever tactics but on the presence of the Divine Warrior with them.

During the appropriation of the Promised Land, Israel had to learn the difficult lesson that their most dangerous enemy was not outside their camp but within their own rank and file. The greatest challenge that stood before them was neither the fortified walls of the Canaanite cities nor their advanced military technology, but the obstinate will of individuals within their own camp to willfully ignore the instructions of the Lord.

Waiting for our heavenly inheritance (*1 Pet. 1:4, Col. 3:24*), we face similar challenges. While we are on the border of the Promised Land, our faithfulness is tested, and we can be victorious only through surrender to Jesus Christ.

*\*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, November 8.*

**SUNDAY**

*November 2*

## **Breach of the Covenant**

**Read Joshua 7. What were the two major causes of Israel's defeat by the inhabitants of Ai?**

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It is interesting to observe that the reader knows, from the outset, the reason for Yahweh's anger, as well as the name of the offender. Thus, the suspense of the story of uncovering the trespass of Achan is provided by the tension between the perspective of the reader and that of Joshua and the Israelites. Like many other chapters of the Old Testament, Joshua 7 has a chiastic structure. The central, climactic segment within it answers the question of why the Israelites were not able to conquer Ai on their first attempt.

There were two main reasons for Israel's defeat by the inhabitants of Ai: Achan's sin and the Israelites' overconfidence in their own strength. The latter resulted in their neglecting to consult the will of the Lord before the attack against Ai and their underestimating the force of the enemy.

Based on Joshua 7:1, 11-13, we can see that, although Achan was responsible for the treacherous act of breaking the ban, the whole nation is held responsible and suffers for what he did. God describes the sin of Achan by gradually showing its gravity through the cumulative use, in verse 11, of the adverb "even," or "also" (Heb. *gam*). First, the most common term for sin is used: "*khata'*." Then the act of transgression is described by five more specific sins introduced by the adverb *gam*: (1) '*abar*, also "to cross over, to transgress," (2) even taking (*laqakh*) from the things devoted to destruction (*kherem*), (3) also stealing (*ganab*), (4) also deceiving (*kakhash*), and (5) even putting (*sim*) the stolen *kherem* among their stuff.

The covenant between Yahweh and Israel involved the people at both individual and corporate levels. In the light of the covenant, Israel is treated as an indivisible



unity of the chosen nation of God; therefore, the sin of one, or even some, of its members incurs guilt upon the whole covenantal community. As the Lord said, "Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them" (*Josh. 7:11, NKJV*).

**What are ways whole communities can suffer, and have suffered, from the bad acts of individuals within the community? What examples can you think of, and how was the community impacted?**

**MONDAY**

*November 3*

## **The Sin of Achan**

**Read Joshua 7:16-19. What does the entire procedure tell us about both God and Achan?**

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Instead of unveiling the identity of the transgressor, God sets up a procedure that reveals both His justice and grace. After explaining the reason for Israel's defeat and calling for the sanctification of the people (*Josh. 7:13*), He allows a time span between the announcement of the procedure and its application, which gives Achan time to think, repent, and confess his sin. Similarly, his family (if they knew what happened) has the opportunity to decide whether they want to be involved in the cover-up or refuse to be accomplices, like the sons of Korah, who avoided

destruction by refusing to side with their father (*compare with Num. 16:23-33, Num. 26:11*).

The solution to the predicament follows the opposite direction to how it entered and plagued Israel: corporate guilt is eliminated and narrowed down from Israel to one tribe; from tribe to family; from family to household; and from household to individuals. Besides revealing the offender, the investigative process also cleared the innocent. This was an equally important aspect of the meticulous juridical procedure, where God Himself acts as witness to the unseen acts of Achan.

The reader can almost feel the tension as God zeroes in on Achan. Who cannot wonder at the man's obstinacy in hoping that he could go undetected? Nothing is concealed from the penetrating eyes of the Lord (*Ps. 139:1-16, 2 Chron. 16:9*), who knows what is hidden in the heart of a man (*1 Sam. 16:7, Jer. 17:10, Prov. 5:21*).

It is important to notice the way Joshua addresses Achan: "My son." This expression shows not only the age and leadership role of Joshua, but also reveals the spirit in which this great warrior approached justice. His heart was full of compassion for Achan, even though he was called to

execute judgment on the offender. Through his attitude, Joshua was again foreshadowing the sensitivity, kindness, and love of the One who "was never rude, never needlessly spoke a severe word, never gave needless pain to a sensitive soul. . . . He [Jesus] fearlessly denounced hypocrisy, unbelief, and iniquity, but tears were in His voice as He uttered His scathing rebukes."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 353.

**How does the realization that God knows all that you do, even your hidden things, impact how you live? How *should* it impact how you live?**

**TUESDAY**

November 4

## Fateful Choices

Read Joshua 7:19–21. What is Joshua asking Achan to do? What is the significance of such a request? How do we understand his confession?

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Joshua asks Achan to do two things: first, to give glory to God and honor Him. Second, to confess what he has done without concealing it. Achan was supposed to give glory to God by admitting what he had done. The term used here (*todah*) can refer to thanksgiving (*Ps. 26:7, Isa. 51:3, Jer. 17:26*), but also to the confession of sin (*Ezra 10:11*).

Unfortunately, the biblical text gives no indication that Achan showed any sign of real repentance. He hoped

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until the end to remain hidden. His defiant attitude qualified him to be regarded as a high-handed offender, for whom there was no atonement according to the law of Moses (*compare with Num. 15:27-31*).

The words of Achan in Joshua 7:21 are reminiscent of the fall of Adam and Eve. Eve saw (*ra'ah*) that the tree was desirable (*khamad*) and finally took (*laqakh*) from its fruit (*Gen. 3:6*). In his confession, Achan admits that he saw (*ra'ah*) in the plunder a beautiful mantle of Shinar, 200 shekels of silver, and a bar of gold. He then coveted (*khamad*) and took (*laqakh*) them. Just as in the case of Adam and Eve, the choice of Achan reveals that the sin of covetousness is the sin of unbelief. It suspects God of not wanting the best for His creatures and of hiding some exquisite pleasures from them, which belong to the realm of divinity only.

Besides the allusion to the primordial human fall, the text highlights a stark contrast between the attitudes of Rahab (*compare with Josh. 2:1-13*) and that of Achan. The one took the spies to the roof and hid them from the soldiers; the other took forbidden things and hid them from Joshua. The one showed kindness to the Israelite spies and

helped them secure victory; the other brought trouble on Israel by his greed and secured defeat. The one made a covenant with the Israelites; the other broke the covenant with Yahweh. Rahab saved herself and her family, and they became respected citizens in Israel; Achan doomed himself and his family to death and became an example of ignominy.

**Think about the sin of covetousness. How can we avoid succumbing to it, no matter how much we have or don't have?**

*(Compare with Luke 12:15.)*

**WEDNESDAY**

*November 5*

## **The Door of Hope**

Read Joshua 8:1-29. What does this story tell us about how God can transform our most abysmal failures into opportunities?

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The strategy of Yahweh converts Israel's initial defeat into a tactical advantage, thus transforming the Valley of Achor (Hebrew word for "trouble") into a door of hope (*compare with Hos. 2:15*). Having gained too much self-confidence by their first victory over the Israelites, the citizens of Ai repeat their strategy in attacking the Israelites who feign retreat and defeat. Once the inhabitants of Ai are lured out of their stronghold, the

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30,000 Israelites, positioned not too far behind the city (*Josh. 8:4*), will capture the empty city by setting it on fire. Joshua 8:7 makes it clear that it is not the strategy that brings victory, but it is the Lord Himself who will grant the victory and hand the city of Ai over to the Israelites. Even in a chapter in which the military aspects dominate the narrative more than in any other chapter of the book, the text highlights the underlying truth that victory is the gift of Yahweh.

The decisive moment of the battle occurs when the men of Ai leave the city and start pursuing the Israelites. This is the second time that God speaks in the whole chapter after He gave the strategy in Joshua 8:2, signaling that He oversees the battle. Until this moment, we don't know the outcome of the battle. From this point onward, it becomes clear that the Israelite army is victorious.

The weapon in the hand of Joshua was a sickle sword, or scimitar, rather than a sword or javelin. In the time of Joshua, it may not have been used as an actual weapon, but it had become a symbol of sovereignty. And, besides giving the signal for attack, it expresses God's sovereignty in the defeat of Ai. By stretching out the sickle sword until

the full victory is won, Joshua is shown to have fully assumed the leadership role Moses exercised at the crossing of the Red Sea (*Exod. 14:16*) and in the war against the Amalekites (*Exod. 17:11-13*), where Joshua personally led the combat.

This time there is no visible, miraculous intervention of God, yet the victory over Ai is no less divinely assisted than that over the Egyptians in the first generation or in the recent victory over Jericho. The key to success is in Joshua's faith in the word of the Lord and his unwavering obedience to it. The principle seen in this story remains valid for God's people today, wherever they live and whatever their challenges.

**THURSDAY**

*November 6*

## **A Witness to God's Power**

As we have learned (see lesson five), God had given the pagan nations an opportunity to know about Him and to turn from their evil ways. They, however, had refused and were ultimately facing the judgment of God.

**Read Joshua 7:6-9, which deals with Joshua's initial reaction to the calamity that befell them. Focus especially on Joshua 7:9. What important theological principle is found in his words?**

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At first, Joshua sounds like the children of Israel did in the midst of their hardships after leaving Egypt, such as: " 'Oh, that we had died by the hand of the LORD in  
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the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger' " (*Exod. 16:3, NKJV*).

And here's Joshua: "Alas, Lord GOD, why have You brought this people over the Jordan at all—to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? Oh, that we had been content, and dwelt on the other side of the Jordan!" (*Josh. 7:7, NKJV*).

Soon after, however, he shows his great concern for the damage that the name and reputation of God will take from this defeat. "For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear it, and surround us, and cut off our name from the earth. Then what will You do for Your great name?" (*Josh. 7:9, NKJV*).

This reveals a theme and principle that was central to God's purposes with Israel. Though He wanted the pagan nations around them to see what great things God would do for His people who obeyed Him, they could also, as Rahab did, learn about Israel's God by the power of His people's conquests. On the other hand, were things to go badly, as they did here, the nations would deem Israel's God weak and

ineffective (see *Num. 14:16, Deut. 9:28*), which could embolden Canaanite resistance.

In other words, even in the context of the Hebrews taking the land, great issues and principles were involved, which included bringing honor and glory to God, who was also the only hope for the pagans, as well as for Israel.

**Read Deuteronomy 4:5-9. In what ways can we see a parallel here between Israel and their witness to the world and our witness as Seventh-day Adventists today?**

**FRIDAY**

*November 7*

**Further Thought:** Read Ellen G. White, "The Fall of Jericho," pp. 493-498, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

"The deadly sin that led to Achan's ruin had its root in covetousness, of all sins one of the most common and the most lightly regarded. . . .

"Achan acknowledged his guilt, but when it was too late for the confession to benefit himself. He had seen the armies of Israel return from Ai defeated and disheartened; yet he did not come forward and confess his sin. He had seen Joshua and the elders of Israel bowed to the earth in grief too great for words. Had he then made confession, he would have given some proof of true penitence; but he still kept silence. He had listened to the proclamation that a great crime had been committed, and had even heard its character definitely stated. But his lips were sealed. Then came the solemn investigation. How his soul thrilled with terror as he saw his tribe pointed out, then his

family and his household! But still he uttered no confession, until the finger of God was placed upon him. Then, when his sin could no longer be concealed, he admitted the truth. How often are similar confessions made. There is a vast difference between admitting facts after they have been proved and confessing sins known only to ourselves and to God. Achan would not have confessed had he not hoped by so doing to avert the consequences of his crime. But his confession only served to show that his punishment was just. There was no genuine repentance for sin, no contrition, no change of purpose, no abhorrence of evil."—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 496-498.

**Discussion Questions:**

**1. Discuss the implications of the tenth commandment (*Exod. 20:17*) in a world dominated by advertisements and consumerism. How can we practically distinguish between a want and a need, and why is that distinction important?**

2. Read Daniel's prayer in Daniel 9:4-19. Why is it significant that Daniel, in confessing Israel's sins, kept on saying "we" did all these bad things, even though we have no record of Daniel himself ever doing evil?

3. Think about the question at the end of Thursday's study. Why was the Israelites' obedience to all the "statutes and judgments" so important to their witness? How does this same principle apply to our church today? That is, how much more effective would our witness be if we actually followed all that we have been given by God?



# Ultimate Loyalty:

## Worship *in a War Zone*

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### SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Josh. 5:1-7; Exod. 12:6; 1 Cor. 5:7; Josh. 8:30-35; Deut. 8:11, 14; Heb. 9:11, 12.*

**Memory Text:** "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you" (*Matthew 6:33, ESV*).

**T**his week we are going to look at some key moments during Israel's presence in the Promised Land, when Israel rededicated themselves to the Lord, sometimes in the face of impending danger. Joshua took the seemingly irrational decision to circumcise the Israelites on enemy territory (*Josh. 5:1-9*); to celebrate the Passover in the face of imminent danger (*Josh. 5:10-12*); to build an altar and worship the Lord while the conquest was in full swing (*Josh. 8:30-35*); and to set up the tabernacle of the Lord when seven tribes in Israel had not yet received their inheritance (*Josh. 18:1, 2*).

In our busy lives, we tend to give attention to the urgencies that life throws at us. Very often we neglect to carve out quality time to renew our commitment to God and to pause and express our thankfulness for what He has done and daily continues to do for us. Morning and evening worship, as well as the family altar, seem to be so out of context in our overcharged, convenience-driven, and achievement-oriented life. Yet, deep in our hearts, we all know the occasions spent together with God and our loved ones are the best investment of our limited time.

*\*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, November 15.*

**SUNDAY**

*November 9*

## **Covenant First**

Read Joshua 5:1-7. Why did the Lord command Joshua to circumcise the second generation of Israelites at this particular time of the conquest?

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After the exploration of the country, the encouraging report of the spies, and the miraculous crossing over the Jordan, we would expect an immediate engagement with the enemy. However, there is something more important than the military conquest: Israel's covenant with God.

Before the new generation could engage in taking the land, they needed to be fully aware of their special relationship with the Owner of the land. The renewal of the

covenant sign comes as a response to God's gracious and miraculous act of bringing Israel safely across the Jordan.

Our covenant with God should always be an answer of gratitude for what He has already accomplished for us, never an act of trying to obtain some benefit by legalistic conformity to His requirements. (This same concept, no doubt, was crucial to Paul's struggles with those who insisted that Gentile male converts be circumcised, as seen most clearly in his letter to the Galatians.)

Israel was on the verge of the greatest military campaign of its history, and we would expect the whole camp to be busy with war preparations. It was, but not in the conventional sense. Instead of harnessing the horses and sharpening the swords, they engaged in a ritual that left most of the fighting force vulnerable for at least three days.

They did this in order to celebrate their relationship with their God, who delivered them from Egypt. Why? Because they recognized that the battle belongs to the Lord. He is the one who grants them victory and success. Jesus formulated the same principle in slightly different words: "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,

and all these things shall be added to you" (*Matt. 6:33, NKJV*). Most of the time, everyday life seems to pressure us with the urgency of so many important things that we forget to give priority to the most important thing in our life: the daily renewal of our commitment to Christ.

**Think about the times you have neglected time with God because of more "important" matters. Why is this so easy to do, and how can we fight against it?**

**MONDAY**

*November 10*

## **Passover**

**Why is it significant that Joshua chose to celebrate Passover despite the pressing and immense task of taking the Promised Land?** *Read Josh. 5:10; Exod. 12:6; Lev. 23:5; Num. 28:16; Deut. 16:4, 6.*

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The second important activity that precedes the conquest is the celebration of Passover. This takes place in the evening of the fourteenth day of the month, in careful compliance with the instructions given by God. The symbolic significance of the Passover observance receives special emphasis: the events in Joshua mirror those of the Exodus. Passover evokes the night of the tenth plague (*Exodus 12*), when the angel of the Lord killed all the

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firstborn in Egypt and spared the Israelites. This is followed by the Exodus from Egypt, the crossing of the Red Sea, and the journey through the wilderness.

In contrast, the story of the second generation starts in the wilderness, continues with the crossing of the Jordan, involves circumcision and the celebration of Passover, and leads to the crucial moment when another miraculous intervention of the Lord is to be expected against the enemies of Israel, the inhabitants of Canaan. Together with all the preceding acts, the celebration of Passover marks the beginning of a new era in Israel's history.

Also, through the symbol of the sacrificial lamb, the Feast of Passover pointed back to the redemption of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage. But it also pointed forward to its antitypical fulfillment in the Lamb of God (*John 1:29, 36; 1 Cor. 5:7; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19*), who ransomed us from the bondage of sin. At the Lord's Supper, before offering Himself as the ultimate sacrifice, Jesus transformed Passover into a memorial of His death (*Matt. 26:26-29, 1 Cor. 11:23-26*).



However, Passover and the Lord's Supper signal an even more glorious reality: that of the redeemed multitude passing into the heavenly Canaan. John the revelator portrays this antitypical "crossing" event as the 144,000 walking on the sea of crystal, the antitypical Red Sea and river Jordan, before the throne of God (*Rev. 4:6; Rev. 7:9, 10*) and celebrating the antitypical Passover and Lord's Supper at the marriage supper of the Lamb (*Matt. 26:29, Rev. 19:9*).

**What are ways we can, even when we are not celebrating the Lord's Supper, keep the reality of the Cross always before us?**

**TUESDAY**

*November 11*

## **Altars of Renewal**

**What was Joshua's motivation for building an altar to the Lord?** *Read Josh. 8:30, 31; compare with Deut. 11:26-30; Deut. 27:2-10.*

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In the time of the patriarchs, altars marked the path of their pilgrimage and became tangible representations of their claim to the land, which had been promised by God. Now, by erecting an altar, the Israelites bore witness to the fulfillment of the promises given to the forefathers. In this case, the erection of the altar is the direct fulfillment of the instructions given by Moses (*Deut. 11:26-30, Deut. 27:2-10*).

Joshua 8:30-35 plays a significant role in shaping the whole theological message of the book. By linking one of the most gruesome, violent stories (war) to something totally different—a scene of covenant reaffirmation (worship)—Joshua takes us back to one of the most important theological themes launched in the book at the outset: Joshua has the mandate of leading Israel to a life of covenantal obedience (*Josh. 1:7*). This is also the picture of Joshua at the end of the book (*Joshua 24*).

Notwithstanding the importance of warfare and the conquest, there is something even more vital: loyalty to the requirements of God's law. The conquest is only one step in the fulfillment of God's plan for Israel and the restoration of all humanity. Faithfulness to the precepts of the Torah constitutes the ultimate question in the destiny of humanity. Joshua writes the copy of the law on large, whitewashed stones, different from the stones of the altar (*compare with Deut. 27:2-8*). Thus, the stones, which probably contained the Ten Commandments, formed a separate monument in the vicinity of the altar, constantly reminding the Israelites of the privileges and duties implied in the covenant.

Joshua foreshadows the New Testament Jehoshua (Jesus), whose mission was, among other things, to lead humanity back to obedience to God. In order to accomplish this goal, He had to undertake a conflict with the powers of evil. His ultimate goal was to fulfill the covenant requirements on our behalf: "For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us" (2 Cor. 1:20, NKJV).

**What are some spiritual practices we can do now that can have the same functions as building an altar had in ancient times?**

**WEDNESDAY**

*November 12*

## Written on Stones

Read Joshua 8:32-35. What is the meaning of the act described in these verses, and what should it say to us today?

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Mount Ebal is mentioned only in Deuteronomy (*Deut. 11:29; Deut. 27:4, 13*) and in the book of Joshua (*Josh. 8:30, 33*). Along with Gerizim, it was the site where the blessings and curses of the covenant were to be recited. More specifically, according to Deuteronomy 11:29 and Deuteronomy 27:4, 13, it had to be the site of the curses. Here the Israelites were to stand on either side of the ark in the presence of the priests (*Josh. 8:33*). One group

stood in front of Mount Ebal, the other in front of Mount Gerizim. Here they symbolically enacted the two possible ways of relating to the covenant. The sacrifices that were brought there pointed to Jesus, who took upon Himself all the curses of the covenant, so that all who believe in Him might enjoy its blessings (*Gal. 3:13, 2 Cor. 5:21*).

**Why was it necessary to write a copy of the covenant on a monument, visible to all?** (*See Deut. 4:31; Deut. 6:12; Deut. 8:11, 14; 2 Kings 17:38; Ps. 78:7.*)

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We humans tend to be forgetful. We crowd the increasingly bewildering demands of everyday life into shorter and shorter segments of time. We inevitably forget things that do not recur with the same frequency or intensity. At every communion service, we have a special occasion to rededicate ourselves to the Lord and to renew our covenantal commitment. It would be good to perceive

these opportunities not only as chances for individual re-consecration but also as occasions of corporate renewal of our allegiance to God. In an increasingly individualistic society, we must rediscover the power of belonging to a community that shares the same worldview, the same values and beliefs, and the same mission.

**How easy do you find it, in the rush and hubbub of life, to forget the Lord and seek to do things in your own strength and power? Why is this so easy to do, especially when things are going well for you?**

**THURSDAY**

*November 13*

## Longing for His Presence

Read Joshua 18:1, 2. What was the activity for which Joshua interrupted the process of allotting the land?

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After the description of the territories allotted to the two greatest tribes on the west side of the Jordan and to the half-tribe of Manasseh, this passage portrays an assembly of the congregation at Shiloh, where the land is apportioned to the remaining seven smaller tribes.

The establishment of the sanctuary, "My Tabernacle," represents the fulfillment of God's promise to live among His people (*Exod. 25:8; Lev. 26:11, 12*) and reveals the central theme of the book: God's presence in the middle of Israel has made possible the possession of the land and is

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going to be a continual source of blessing for Israel and, through them, to all the earth (*Gen. 12:3*). The worship of God takes center stage and preeminence, even over conquest and allotment of the land! The presence of the sanctuary, and later the Temple, should have always helped the people realize the presence of God among them and their obligations to follow the covenant.

**Read Hebrews 6:19, 20; Hebrews 9:11, 12; and Hebrews 10:19-23. What can we as Christians who do not have an earthly sanctuary enshrining the physical presence of God among us, learn from Joshua?**

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The appearance of the sanctuary should not come as a sudden surprise, because the theme of the sanctuary has been present in the Joshua narrative through the ark of the covenant. This was the central piece of furniture in the Most Holy Place, and it marked the first two sections of

the book: the crossing and the conquest. Now, by placing the erection of the tabernacle in the focal point of the land distribution, Joshua shows that all the life of Israel revolved around the sanctuary, the earthly headquarters of Yahweh.

It is even more important for us, as Christians living in the antitypical Day of Atonement, to focus our eyes on the heavenly sanctuary as we continue our struggle with the modern (or postmodern) giants that challenge our faith, hope, and spiritual inheritance. As we constantly rely on the work of Christ accomplished on the Cross and in the heavenly sanctuary, we can look forward in faith to the time when God once again will dwell among His people, but this time it will be forever. (*Compare with Rev. 21:3.*)

**FRIDAY**

*November 14*

**Further Thought:** Read Ellen G. White, "The Blessings and the Curses," pp. 499-503, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

"According to the directions given by Moses, a monument of great stones was erected upon Mount Ebal. Upon these stones, previously prepared by a covering of plaster, the law was inscribed—not only the ten precepts spoken from Sinai and engraved on the tables of stone, but the laws communicated to Moses, and by him written in a book. Beside this monument was built an altar of unhewn stone, upon which sacrifices were offered unto the Lord. The fact that the altar was set up on Mount Ebal, the mountain upon which the curse was put, was significant, denoting that because of their transgressions of God's law, Israel had justly incurred His wrath, and that it would be at once visited, but for the atonement of Christ, represented by the altar of sacrifice."—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 500.

"But the Communion service was not to be a season of sorrowing. This was not its purpose. As the Lord's disciples gather about His table, they are not to remember and lament their shortcomings. They are not to dwell upon their past religious experience, whether that experience has been elevating or depressing. They are not to recall the differences between them and their brethren. The preparatory service has embraced all this. The self-examination, the confession of sin, the reconciling of differences, has all been done. Now they come to meet with Christ. They are not to stand in the shadow of the cross, but in its saving light. They are to open the soul to the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 659.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What does it mean to you to seek first the kingdom of God? How does that principle shape your daily life?

2. Look at your answer to Wednesday's final question about how easy it is to forget the Lord amid the daily rush of life. In class, discuss why it is so easy to do. What are some solutions?

3. As Adventists, we believe that Jesus is ministering on our behalf in the heavenly sanctuary. How can this conviction be a constant source of hope and strength? Why should the knowledge that it is Jesus who is up there making "intercession" (*Heb. 7:25*) for us help us realize just what good news His work in the heavenly sanctuary is, especially now in the antitypical Day of Atonement?

# Giants of Faith:

## Joshua and Caleb

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### SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Num. 13:6, 30-32; Josh.*

*14:6-14; Luke 18:1-5; Josh. 19:49-51; 2 Cor. 3:18; Rom:*

*12:1, 2.*

**Memory Text:** "Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith" (*Hebrews 13:7, ESV*).

**E**very parent knows that their children learn by example, don't they? How many parents have fretted over seeing their children follow their bad traits instead of their good ones? Whatever our age, we find it easier to do wrong than to do right. It's just part of what it means to be fallen beings. "For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do" (*Rom. 7:15, NKJV*). Who can't relate?

From birth, humans are shaped by the power of example. We learn to do the most basic things in life, such as walking, talking, and expressing our emotions, by imitating those closest to us. As adults, we still need role models, and, even if they are not perfect, we can admire and emulate those spiritual traits that made them giants of faith.

This week, we will take a deeper look into the personal examples of two giants of faith in the book of Joshua: Caleb and Joshua. What is it that made them stand out in their generation and play a key role in the life of God's people during one of the most crucial periods of Israel's history?

*\*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, November 22.*



**SUNDAY**

*November 16*

## **Faithfulness**

Read Genesis 36:15; Numbers 13:6, 30-32; and Joshua 14:6, 14. Who was Caleb? What was his place among the people of Israel?

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The name of Caleb comes from the Hebrew word *keleb*, "dog," which occurs in the Old Testament always in a negative context. However, *keleb* is used in extra-biblical letters and hymns to express a servant's courage, tenacity, and faithfulness to his/her master. In this respect, Caleb was faithful to his name, demonstrating throughout his life unwavering loyalty to his Lord.

What does it say about Caleb that he was willing to speak his mind even though the majority of the spies had a completely different opinion, and the people of Israel threatened him with death? See Num. 14:6-10, 21-25; Num. 26:65; Num. 32:12.

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Consider these important Israelite leaders, contemporaries of Joshua and Caleb: Shammua, Shaphat, Igal, Palti, Gaddiel, Gaddi, Ammiel, Sethur, Nahbi, and Geuel. Do these names sound familiar?

Probably not.

Why? Because they are the names of the other ten spies sent by Moses to explore the land of Canaan. They are forgotten because their names were not worthy of being remembered. The report that they brought portrayed the Promised Land as impossible to conquer. They saw themselves as grasshoppers compared to the giants who inhabited some

areas of the land, and their hearts melted with fear at the "impregnable" walls of the fortified cities in Canaan.

Caleb, as the older of the two spies who brought a positive report, takes the lead in presenting another possibility: the attitude of faith. He was willing to speak up for what he knew was right, despite the opposition, even in the face of potential death: "And all the congregation said to stone them with stones" (*Num. 14:10, NKJV*).

**What do you do when most people around you seem to have a different opinion, one that goes contrary to your deepest convictions?**

**MONDAY**

*November 17*

## **Give Me This Hill Country**

Read Joshua 14:6-14, Numbers 14:24, Numbers 32:12, Deuteronomy 1:36, and Luke 6:45. How would you describe Caleb and Joshua's attitude? What does it mean to follow the Lord fully?

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Caleb never forgot the promise the Lord had given him through Moses: that he would enter the land where his feet had trodden (*Num. 14:24*). Forty years later, he refers to his own report on the land as a word "as it was in my heart" (*Josh. 14:7, NKJV*). His report was based on his conviction that, with God's guidance and help, Israel would be able to conquer the land.

In contrast to the report of the other ten spies, who inspired fear among the Israelites, Caleb manifested a wholehearted trust and commitment to the promise of the Lord. The Hebrew phrase, which literally means "I was full after the LORD" (*Josh. 14:8*), is probably a short form of a longer idiom: "My heart was fully following the LORD," or "I filled my heart to walk behind/after the LORD." In contrast with others who walked after foreign gods and who did not follow the Lord fully, Caleb's heart was wholly dedicated to the Lord.

The same expression is later repeated twice, emphasizing Caleb's faithfulness (*Josh. 14:9, 14*). His own characterization is in harmony with what the Lord Himself called a "different spirit" (*Num. 14:24, NKJV*) that distinguished Caleb from the other ten spies. Even at the age of 85, he continued to be an example of what the Lord can achieve through people whose hearts are fully dedicated to Him and His cause.

Caleb understood that the territory each tribe would eventually possess was directly proportionate to the extent to which they dared to claim the promises of the Lord and how much land they were willing to tread upon by faith.

God's promises are not self-fulfilling, in the sense that they come true irrespective of our will. Rather, they require faith accompanied by resolute action. The Hebrew term *'ulay*, "maybe" (*Josh. 14:12*), can express fear and doubt, but it usually denotes hope and the anticipation that something positive will take place (*Gen. 16:2; Num. 22:6, 11; Num. 23:3*).

**What compromises, "small" compromises, are the kinds of things that can keep us from fully following the Lord?**

**TUESDAY**

*November 18*

## **The Power of Example**

Read Joshua 15:16-19, Judges 1:13, and Judges 3:7-11.

What does this story tell you about the power of example?

How is Caleb's attitude being reproduced in the younger generation?

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In this passage, Caleb offers his daughter, Achsah, in marriage to the one who conquers Debir. Othniel captures the city and wins the hand of Achsah. This story is important because, once again, it reveals Caleb's courage, faith, and readiness to take on challenges.

It also shows that the next generation of Israelites followed the example of these giants of faith, Caleb and Joshua. As the older generation closes their ministry,

there is a new generation ready to face the challenges and continue to fulfill God's plan for Israel.

In a way that is not unlike Caleb's request to Joshua, "Give me this hill country," Achsah, encouraged by her husband, displays the same faith and resolution that her father demonstrated. Through her determination and boldness, Achsah continues the line of Caleb's example of the fulfillment of the promise to possess the land.

Indeed, the land is a gift from Yahweh to Israel, but Israel must appropriate it by claiming the promises of the Lord with faith and courage. Achsah's determination foreshadows the perseverance of those women in the Gospels who would not be turned away by the crowd or the disciples and would not give up until they received Jesus' blessing for themselves and their families.

**Read Luke 18:1-5. What lesson is here for us?**

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Passing on the torch of faith to the next generation is crucial to the fulfillment of the mission God has entrusted to us. Think about the challenges of passing on faith to the next generation, on the one hand, and about the opportunities for young people to assume more responsibility in the work of God, on the other. What can we do to facilitate and train youth to assume godly leadership? How crucial is our example in this process?

**WEDNESDAY**

*November 19*

## **Humble Hero**

The long lists of place names, which constituted landmarks on the borders of the territories assigned to the tribes of Israel, are bookended by the report of land allocation to the two heroes, Caleb and Joshua, of the first reconnoiter. Caleb received his inheritance first, while Joshua received his last. Up to this point, Joshua allocated the land to the tribes of Israel; now it is time for the people of Israel to give Joshua his inheritance.

**Read Joshua 19:49-51. What are the implications of the fact that the great leader of Israel who apportioned the land receives his inheritance last?**

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The city that Joshua receives is Timnath-serah, a name composed of two words. The first, Timnath, derives from a verb (*manah*) whose meaning is to count or to assign, and it means portion or territory. The second word can be derived from a Hebrew verb (*serach*), and it means excess or leftover (*compare with Exod. 26:12*). The name of Joshua's city can be translated as the leftover portion or the remaining territory.

The name of the city that Joshua has chosen from what was left testifies to the noble character of Israel's second leader. First of all, he waited until all the people received their portion. Then, Joshua did not choose one of the densely populated territories of the land or the most impressive cities as his inheritance, but a modest city, or perhaps the ruins of it, in order to rebuild it with arduous work (*compare with Josh. 19:50*).

Moreover, Timnath-serah was located near Shiloh, in the vicinity of the sanctuary, which shows where Joshua's priorities lay and where his heart was bound. Certainly, after the newly born nation of Israel had been led into the Promised Land, and, with God's help, secured the inheritance of each tribe and family, it would not have

objected to Joshua's demand for a more impressive inheritance. Yet, Joshua was content to live a simple life with a focus on what is most important, thus embodying the prayer expressed later by David: "One thing I have desired of the LORD, that will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in His temple" (*Ps. 27:4, NKJV*).

**What lessons can you draw for yourself regarding Joshua's attitude? How might you apply it to yourself now?**

**THURSDAY**

*November 20*

## Changed by Contemplation

Contemplating the life example of great heroes of faith is essential for our spiritual growth. At the same time, our ultimate example is Jesus Christ—His life and teachings. How does focusing on the life of Jesus change us? See *Heb. 12:1, 2; 2 Cor. 3:18*.

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Marco Iacoboni, a neuroscientist at the University of California, Los Angeles, researched the function of mirror neurons. These small cell circuits are activated both when we perform a certain action—such as laughing or embracing someone—and when we observe someone else performing the same action. The activity of these neurons reduces the distinction between seeing and doing.

Ellen G. White speaks about the importance of beholding the character of Jesus: "Looking unto Jesus we obtain brighter and more distinct views of God, and by beholding we become changed. Goodness, love for our fellow men, becomes our natural instinct. We develop a character which is the counterpart of the divine character. Growing into His likeness, we enlarge our capacity for knowing God. More and more we enter into fellowship with the heavenly world, and we have continually increasing power to receive the riches of the knowledge and wisdom of eternity."—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 355.

**Read Romans 12:1, 2. What two processes work for conflicting purposes in our lives? How can we be sure that we give room to the right one?**

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In the summary chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, the apostle Paul speaks about two antagonistic forces

trying to shape our lives. On the one hand, the surrounding world, with its various influences, tries to force us daily into its own mold, effecting a conformation in us that works from the outside in.

To counteract this impact, the Holy Spirit is able to transform us inside out in a manner similar to the way a caterpillar metamorphoses into a beautiful butterfly. But for that process to happen, we need to consecrate ourselves to God and ask Him to continue the good work that He has started in us (*Phil. 1:6*). In the end, we have to make the conscious choice, moment by moment, to walk in the Spirit.

**FRIDAY***November 21*

**Further Thought:** "Caleb's faith now was just what it was when his testimony had contradicted the evil report of the spies. He had believed God's promise that He would put His people in possession of Canaan, and in this he had followed the Lord fully. He had endured with his people the long wandering in the wilderness, thus sharing the disappointments and burdens of the guilty; yet he made no complaint of this, but exalted the mercy of God that had preserved him in the wilderness when his brethren were cut off. Amid all the hardships, perils, and plagues of the desert wanderings, and during the years of warfare since entering Canaan, the Lord had preserved him; and now at upwards of fourscore his vigor was unabated. He did not ask for himself a land already conquered, but the place which above all others the spies had thought it impossible to subdue. By the help of God he would wrest his stronghold from the very giants whose power had staggered the faith of Israel. It was no desire



for honor or aggrandizement that prompted Caleb's request. The brave old warrior was desirous of giving to the people an example that would honor God, and encourage the tribes fully to subdue the land which their fathers had deemed unconquerable."—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 512, 513.

"It was Caleb's faith in God that gave him courage, that kept him from the fear of man, and enabled him to stand boldly and unflinchingly in the defense of the right. Through reliance on the same power, the mighty General of the armies of heaven, every true soldier of the cross may receive strength and courage to overcome the obstacles that seem insurmountable."—Ellen G. White, *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, May 30, 1912.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Discuss the power of peer pressure and the courage it takes to speak up when others do not. What is the role of courage in practicing our faith? How can we

avoid being rude while standing for what we believe is right?

2. Share in your class some examples of faith from your church or community that shaped your life and character. What are the traits of these people that are worth following?

3. Think about and discuss the influence media has on our life. How can we avoid its negative effect while harnessing its potential for good purposes?

4. Reflect more on the humility of Joshua as a leader and his desire to live close to the sanctuary. In what ways does his example speak to you?

# Heirs of Promises, Prisoners of Hope

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## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Gen. 3:17-24; Deut. 6:3;*

*Josh. 13:1-7; Heb. 12:28; Lev. 25:1-5, 8-13; Ezek.  
37:14, 25.*

**Memory Text:** "Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of

hope; today I declare that I will restore to you  
double" (*Zechariah 9:12, ESV*).

**J**oshua 13-21 contains long lists of geographical boundary markers that delineate portions of land allocated to the tribes of Israel. For the modern reader, these lists might seem irrelevant, but they are based on a theological understanding of the Promised Land that is significant for us today. Through these concrete lists, God wanted to teach the Israelites that the land was not a dream. It was promised to them in a very tangible, measurable way. But they had to make that promise a reality by acting on it.

That is, yes, God was going to give land to them as an inheritance; it was going to be a gift, made in fulfillment of what He promised their fathers. "See, I have set the land before you; go in and possess the land which the LORD swore to your fathers—to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—to give to them and their descendants after them" (*Deut. 1:8, NKJV*). But yes, they too had their part to play.

This week we will look at some theological concepts related to the Promised Land and their spiritual implications for those who claim all the promises found in Jesus.

*\*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, November 29.*

**SUNDAY**

*November 23*

## **Eden and Canaan**

**Read Genesis 2:15 and Genesis 3:17-24. What were the consequences of the Fall, as far as the living space of the first human couple was concerned?**

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At Creation, God placed Adam and Eve in a perfect environment that embodied abundance and beauty. The first human couple met their Creator in the setting of a lovely living space that could provide for all their physical needs. In addition to the spoken word of God, the Garden of Eden served as a learning center where Adam and Eve gained significant insight into God's character and the life He intended for them. Therefore, when they broke the trusting relationship with their Creator, their relationship with

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the Garden of Eden changed as well, and, as a sign of the broken relationship, they had to leave the garden. They lost the territory that God had given to them. Thus, the Garden of Eden became the symbol of abundant life, and we will rediscover its motifs in the theme of the Promised Land.

**How did the patriarchs perceive the promise of the land?** (See Gen. 13:14, 15; Gen. 26:3, 24; Gen. 28:13.) **What do you think it means to us, as Adventists, to live as heirs of the promises** (Heb. 6:11-15)?

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As Abraham entered the land God had shown him, by faith that land became the Land of Promise to him and his descendants. It remained the Land of Promise for 400 years. The patriarchs did not really own the land; it was not theirs in such a way that they were able to give it to their children as an inheritance. Rather, it belonged to

God, as the Garden of Eden had belonged to Him. As Adam and Eve did not do anything that entitled them to the Garden of Eden, Israel had not contributed anything to deserve the land, either. The Promised Land was a gift of God based on His initiative. Israel had no inherent right or claim to own the land (*Deut. 9:4-6*); it was only by God's grace that they could possess it.

The patriarchs were heirs of the promises until they were fulfilled. We, as Christ's followers, have inherited even better promises (*Heb. 8:6*) that will be fulfilled if we become "imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (*Heb. 6:12, RSV*).



**MONDAY**

*November 24*

## **The Land as a Gift**

Read Exodus 3:8; Leviticus 20:22; Leviticus 25:23; Numbers 13:27; Deuteronomy 4:1, 25, 26; Deuteronomy 6:3; and Psalm 24:1. What was the special relationship between God, Israel, and the Promised Land?

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At a very basic level, land offers physical identity to a nation. By locating the nation, it also determines the occupation and lifestyle of the nation. Slaves were rootless and belonged nowhere; someone else enjoyed the results of their work. Having land meant freedom. The identity of the chosen people was strongly linked to their dwelling in the land.

There was a special relationship between God, Israel, and the land. Israel received the land from God as a gift, not as an inalienable right. The chosen people could own the land as long as they were in a covenantal relationship with Yahweh and respected the precepts of the covenant. In other words, they could not have the land and its blessings without the blessing of God.

At the same time, it is true that the land provided a lens through which Israel could better understand God. Living in the land would always remind them of a faithful, promise-keeping, and trustworthy God. Neither the land nor Israel would have existed without the initiative of God, who was the source and foundation of their existence. While the Israelites were in Egypt, the Nile and the irrigation system, coupled with hard work, provided the crops that they needed for subsistence. Canaan was different. They depended on rain for the abundance of their harvests, and it was only God who could control the weather. Thus, the land reminded Israel of their constant dependence on God.

Even if Israel received the land as a gift from Yahweh, in the ultimate sense, God Himself remained the owner. As the true owner of the whole earth (*Ps. 24:1*),

Yahweh has the right to assign the land to Israel or to take it away. If God is the owner of the land, the Israelites and, by extension, all humans are strangers and sojourners, or, in modern terminology, we are all God's long-term guests on His land/earth.

**In the light of 1 Peter 2:11 and Hebrews 11:9-13, what does it mean to you personally to live as a stranger and sojourner looking forward to the city whose designer and builder is God Himself?**

**TUESDAY**

*November 25*

## **The Challenge of the Land**

Read Joshua 13:1-7. Even though the land of Canaan was a gift from God, what were some of the challenges that came with possessing it?

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Given the fact that for centuries the Israelites had been living as slaves, their military skills were inadequate to conquer the land. Not even their slave masters, the Egyptians, with their skilled and well-equipped armies, were able to occupy it permanently. The Egyptians never conquered Canaan completely because of the impregnability of the walled cities. Now a nation of former slaves is told to conquer a land that their former masters were unable to subdue. If they are to ever possess the

land, it will be through God's grace alone, not through their own effort.

Joshua 13 through 21 deals with the division of the land to the various tribes of Israel. This allotment tells Israel not only what has been apportioned to them but also what still must be occupied within that territory. The Israelites can securely live in the land that God has given to them as an inheritance. They are the rightful and legitimate tenants of the land under God's ownership. Yet God's initiative must be matched by human response. The first half of the book shows how God gave the land by dispossessing the Canaanites; the second half reports on how Israel took the land by settling it.

This complexity of the conquest illustrates the dynamics of our salvation. Similar to Israel, we cannot do anything to earn our salvation (*Eph. 2:8, 9*). It is a gift, just as the land was God's gift to Israel based on their covenantal relationship with Him. It certainly wasn't based on their merits (*see Deut. 9:5*).

However, for the Israelites to enjoy God's gift, they had to assume all the responsibilities that came with living in the land, just as we have to go through the

process of our sanctification in loving obedience to the requirements of being citizens of God's kingdom. Though not the same thing, the parallel between their being given the land by grace and our being given salvation by grace are close enough. We have been given a wonderful gift, but it is something that we can forfeit if we are not careful.

**How do Christians today encounter similar challenges to those related to occupying the Promised Land? See Phil. 2:12, Heb. 12:28.**

**WEDNESDAY**

*November 26*

## **The Jubilee**

The land was so central to the existence of Israel as God's people that it could not be apportioned as a whole. It had to be divided by tribes, clans, and families (*Num. 34:13-18*) in order to prevent it from becoming the possession of a few leading elites.

**Read Leviticus 25:1-5, 8-13. What was the purpose of the Sabbatical year and of the Year of Jubilee?**

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By contrast with Egypt, where citizens regularly lost their land and became Pharaoh's serfs, the purpose of God for the Israelites was that they would never become indefinitely disenfranchised. Nobody, outside the clan and

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family to whom it had been originally allotted, could own the land. In fact, according to God's plan, the land could literally never be sold; it could only be leased according to its value established by the number of years left until the next Jubilee. Therefore, the relatives of a person who was obliged to "sell" his ancestral land had the duty to redeem it even before the Jubilee (*Lev. 25:25*).

The allotment of the land becomes a window into God's heart. As our heavenly Father, He wants His children to be generous with those who are less fortunate and to allow their lands to feed them every seventh year. The Sabbatical year applied the principle of the Sabbath commandment on a larger scale. Besides valuing and encouraging hard work, ownership of the land also calls for respect and kindness to those facing financial challenges.

Land ownership legislation provided every Israelite with the opportunity to be freed from inherited or self-induced oppressive circumstances and to have a fresh start in life.

In essence, this is the main purpose of the gospel: to erase the distinction between rich and poor, employer and employee, privileged and underprivileged, putting us all on



equal footing by recognizing our complete need of God's grace.

Unfortunately, Israel neglected to keep the standard set by God and, after centuries, the warnings of dispossession were fulfilled (*2 Chron. 36:20, 21*).

**How can the principles of the Israelite land allotment and the Sabbath remind us that, in God's eyes, we are all equal? How can the Sabbath help us say "no" to the exploitive, vicious cycles of consumerism that plague many societies?**

**THURSDAY**

*November 27*

## **The Land Restored**

Read Jeremiah 24:6; Jeremiah 31:16; Ezekiel 11:17; Ezekiel 28:25; and Ezekiel 37:14, 25. What was the promise of God concerning the return of Israel to the Promised Land and how was it fulfilled?

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During the Babylonian exile, the Israelites experienced not only the sad reality of being rootless but also the promise that their relationship with God, though made concrete through the promise of the land, was not conditioned on, and limited to, possessing the land. When the Israelites confessed their sins, repented, and looked for the Lord with all their hearts, God fulfilled His promise again, and brought them back to their land as a

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sign of their restoration. That is, He was still their God, even while they were not in the land.

However, as the promise that Israel would possess the land forever was conditional (*Deut. 28:63, 64; Josh. 23:13, 15; 1 Kings 9:7; 2 Kings 17:23; Jer. 12:10-12*), so was the promise to re-settle and make Israel prosper in the land after the exile. At the same time, prophets of the Old Testament pointed to a restoration that a future Davidic king would bring (*Isa. 9:6, 7; Zech. 9:9, 16*). This promise was fulfilled in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, in whom all the promises to ancient Israel would have their fulfillment.

In the New Testament, the Promised Land is not mentioned directly, but we are told that the promises of God have been fulfilled in and through Jesus Christ (*2 Cor. 1:20, Rom. 15:8*). Thus, in the light of Christ, the land is reinterpreted, and it becomes the symbol of the spiritual blessings that God plans to give to His faithful people here and now (*Eph. 2:6*) and in the hereafter.

The ultimate fulfillment of the divine promise of rest, abundance, and well-being in the land will take place on the new earth, liberated from sin and its consequences.

In that sense, as Christians, our hope is based on Christ's promise that He will return, and, after a 1,000-year period in heaven, establish His eternal kingdom on the earth made new. This will be the ultimate fulfillment of all the promises about the land.

**Read John 14:1-3, Titus 2:13, and Revelation 21:1-3.**

**What ultimate hope is found for us here in these verses, and why does the death of Jesus guarantee us the fulfillment of this hope?**

**FRIDAY**

November 28

**Further Thought:** Read Ellen G. White, "The Controversy Ended," pp. 672-678 in *The Great Controversy*.

"We shall be saved eternally when we enter in through the gates into the city. Then we may rejoice that we are saved, eternally saved. But until then we need to heed the injunction of the apostle, and to 'fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of us should seem to come short of it' [Hebrews 4:1]. Having a knowledge of Canaan, singing the songs of Canaan, rejoicing in the prospect of entering into Canaan, did not bring the children of Israel into the vineyards and olive-groves of the promised land. They could make it theirs in truth only by occupation, by complying with the conditions, by exercising living faith in God, by appropriating his promises to themselves."—Ellen G. White, *The Youth's Instructor*, February 17, 1898.

"In the Bible the inheritance of the saved is called 'a country' Hebrews 11:14-16. There the heavenly Shepherd leads His flock to fountains of living waters. The tree of life yields its fruit every month, and the leaves of the tree are for the service of the nations. There are ever-flowing streams, clear as crystal, and beside them waving trees cast their shadows upon the paths prepared for the ransomed of the Lord. There the wide-spreading plains swell into hills of beauty, and the mountains of God rear their lofty summits. On those peaceful plains, beside those living streams, God's people, so long pilgrims and wanderers, shall find a home."—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 675.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Think about the Promised Land as a symbol of the abundant life that Christ promised to His followers in John 10:10. How do the benefits of living in an abundant land portray the blessings of salvation?

2. What is the relationship between being citizens of a land and living a certain lifestyle? How does one affect the other? What are some of the implications of being citizens of God's kingdom?

3. As humans, we are constantly disappointed by the promises of others and sometimes by promises we make to ourselves. Why can you trust God's promises?

4. How can we make the promise of the new earth part of our future in a real and concrete way, even now?

## The True Joshua

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### SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *1 Cor. 10:1–13; Matt. 2:15;*

*Josh. 1:1–3; Acts 3:22–26; Heb. 3:7–4:11; 2 Cor. 10:3–5.*

**Memory Text:** "Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come" (*1 Corinthians 10:11, ESV*).



**I**n the book of Joshua, there is a sense that the life of its main character points beyond itself to a reality that is much greater than the man himself. We see this principle all through the Bible, such as with the land of Canaan, a symbol of our eternal hope in a new earth. And, of course, the earthly sanctuary service pointed to a greater reality: "But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation" (*Heb. 9:11, NKJV*).

But the question arises: In what way does Joshua point to a future fulfillment? How can we be sure that such an interpretation of the book is legitimate? What are the biblical principles that control the application of the book of Joshua to New Testament realities and to end-time events?

This week, we will look at principles of biblical interpretation concerning typology. We will study how the Bible itself contains indicators of typology and how the life of Joshua foreshadows the ministry of the Messiah and

points to symbolism fulfilled in the church, as well as in the consummation of human history.

*\*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, December 6.*

**SUNDAY**

*November 30*

## **Biblical Typology**

**Study the following Scriptures that refer to types and try to define what biblical typology is: *Rom. 5:14, 1 Cor. 10:1-13, Heb. 8:5, and Heb. 9:23.***

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These biblical passages use the term “type” (Greek *typos*) or “antitype” (Greek *antitypos*) to refer to the way the New Testament writer defined the relationship between an Old Testament text or event, and its meaning in his own time, or in the future.

Typology is a specific interpretation of persons, events, or institutions that prefigure Jesus or other realities contained in the gospel. The type corresponds to the antitype as a mold or a hollow form that reflects the

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original form, even if the latter, the antitype, more fully fulfills the purpose of the type. Thus, the biblical type was shaped according to a divine design that had existed concretely, or conceptually, in the mind of God, and it serves to shape future copies (antitypes).

It is crucial to understand that the writers of the New Testament did not randomly attribute a typological meaning to some Old Testament texts in order to make a point. An Old Testament type is always validated in the prophetic writings before it acquires an antitypical fulfillment in the New Testament.

**Look at how David appears in the Old Testament, and then how he is prefigured in the New. What lessons can we learn about how typology works from this example?**

**a. David** (*Ps. 22:1, 14-18*): \_\_\_\_\_

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**b. The new David** (*Jer. 23:5; Isa. 9:5, 6; Isa. 11:1-5*):

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c. **The antitypical David** (*John 19:24*): \_\_\_\_\_

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By looking at these texts, we discover that the Old Testament itself provides the key for identifying and applying types in the Scriptures. That is, New Testament writers, whose Scripture was the Old Testament, were inspired by the Holy Spirit to use the Old Testament types to reveal “present truth” (*2 Pet. 1:12*), especially about Jesus and His ministry.

**MONDAY**

*December 1*

## **Type and Antitype**

Interpreters of the Bible cannot arbitrarily decide on what constitutes a biblical type, or how that particular type is fulfilled in the New Testament and beyond. The Bible itself provides some controls and principles as to the application of biblical typology.

Similarly, the New Testament unfolds the antitypical fulfillment of a type in three distinct phases: (1) in the life of Christ (the Christological fulfillment), (2) in the experience of the church (the ecclesiological fulfillment), and (3) at the end of time (the eschatological fulfillment).

We can find these types and antitypes all through the Bible, and they are very helpful in showing readers how to understand the Bible and what truths the Word of God is teaching about Jesus, salvation, and the ultimate hope that we have.

Look at the following Old Testament types: Israel, the Exodus, and the sanctuary. How is each fulfilled in the three antitypical phases: the Christological, the ecclesiological, and the eschatological?

1. Israel

- a. Christological phase (*Matt. 2:15*): \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Ecclesiological phase (*Gal. 6:16*): \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Eschatological phase (*Rev. 7:4-8, 14*): \_\_\_\_\_
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2. The Exodus

- a. Christological phase (*Matt. 2:19-21*): \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Ecclesiological phase (*2 Cor. 6:17*): \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Eschatological phase (*Rev. 18:4*): \_\_\_\_\_
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3. The Sanctuary

- a. Christological phase (*John 1:14, John 2:21, Matt. 26:61*): \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Ecclesiological phase (*1 Cor. 3:16, 17; 2 Cor. 6:16*): \_\_\_\_\_
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**c. Eschatological phase** (Rev. 3:12, Rev. 11:19, Rev. 21:3, Rev. 21:22): \_\_\_\_\_

“Since Scripture has a single divine Author, the various parts of Scripture are consistent with each other. . . . All the doctrines of the Bible will cohere with each other; interpretations of individual passages will harmonize with the totality of what Scripture teaches on a given subject.”—*Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, p. 65.

**What do you do when, at times, you find it hard to understand the meaning of certain passages?**



**TUESDAY***December 2*

## Joshua, the Type

In the light of biblical typology, what is the significance of the multiple parallelism between the lives of Moses and Joshua? See *Exod. 3:1, 2; Josh. 1:1–3; Num. 13:1, 2; Josh. 2:1; Exod. 3:5; Josh. 5:15.*

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As we discovered in the first week, Joshua is presented as a new Moses who, in the life of the second generation, repeats the most significant steps of the Exodus from Egypt. Just as Moses was, he is commissioned by a personal encounter with the Lord. Under the leadership of both, Israel's fame among the nations inspires fear. Moses leads Israel in crossing the Red Sea, while Joshua leads Israel in a miraculous crossing of the Jordan. Both leaders

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are reminded of the necessity of circumcision and the importance of the Passover. Manna begins to fall in the time of Moses, and it ends with Joshua. Both are commanded to take off their sandals. The outstretched hand of both signals victory for Israel. Moses gives instructions for the division of the land and the institution of cities of refuge. Joshua fulfills the instructions. Both give a farewell address to the nation and renew the covenant for the people at the end of their ministry.

**Study Deuteronomy 18:15–19, Deuteronomy 34:10–12, John 1:21, Acts 3:22–26, and Acts 7:37. Who fulfills the prophecy of Moses about a prophet like himself? How does Joshua fit into the picture?**

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Joshua's life was a partial fulfillment of the prophecy made by Moses (*Deut. 18:15, 18*). However, the prophecy made by Moses was not fulfilled in its ultimate

sense. In its ultimate sense, the prophecy could only be accomplished (or fulfilled) by the Messiah. He knew the Father intimately (*John 1:14, 18*); He was true and revealed God truthfully (*Luke 10:22, John 14:6, Matt. 22:16*). God indeed put His words in His mouth (*John 14:24*). So, both the life of Moses and that of Joshua become types of the coming Messiah, Jesus.

**How central is Jesus to your own walk with the Lord?  
Why must Jesus, and what He has done for you, be the  
foundation of your whole Christian experience?**

**WEDNESDAY***December 3*

## **The True Joshua, the Antitype**

The story of Joshua must be seen through the prism of typology. The wars conducted by Joshua are historical events, constituting an essential segment of Israel's history. The goal of these wars is to settle the Israelites in the Promised Land, where they can enjoy their allotted inheritance in peace and establish a new society based on the principles of God's law.

Later, Old Testament authors, such as Isaiah, present the work of the Messiah as also consisting of allotting the "desolate inheritances [to His people]" (*Isa. 49:8, NIV*), using the same terminology that is so frequent in the book of Joshua. As the task of Joshua had been to apportion the land to the Israelites, so the Messiah, portrayed as the new Joshua, assigns the spiritual inheritance to a new Israel.

**Read Hebrews 3:7–4:11. How does the New Testament confirm that Joshua, the new Moses, is himself a type of Jesus Christ?**

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The authors of the New Testament presented many aspects of the ministry of Jesus Christ in terms of Joshua's work. As Joshua stepped into Canaan after 40 years in the wilderness, so the "antitypical Joshua," Jesus, entered His earthly ministry after 40 days in the wilderness (*Matt. 4:1-11, Luke 4:1-13*) and His heavenly ministry after 40 days in the wilderness of this earth (*Acts 1:3, 9-11; Heb. 1:2*).

After Jesus' baptism in the River Jordan (His "crossing of the Jordan" [*Matt. 3:13-17, Mark 1:9-11*]), the gospel writers quote from Psalm 2:7 and Isaiah 42:1, from a Messianic psalm and from a song about the Suffering Servant of Yahweh (*Matt. 3:17, Mark 1:11, Luke 3:22*). Consequently, through His baptism, Jesus is presented as the divine

warrior who will—through a life of faithful obedience, even unto death—wage the wars of Yahweh against the evil forces. His life and death on the cross brought about the casting out of Satan, led the conquest over our spiritual enemies, offered spiritual rest to His people, and allotted an inheritance for the redeemed (*Eph. 4:8, Heb. 1:4, Heb. 9:15*).

**What does it mean to be able to “rest” in what Christ has done for us? That is, how can we have assurance that Jesus has defeated Satan in our behalf?**

**THURSDAY***December 4*

## Joshua and Us

Joshua, as a type, points beyond the ministry of Jesus Christ to a fulfillment in the life of the church, Christ's body. In what sense do the wars fought by Israel under Joshua foreshadow the spiritual struggles of the church? How are they different? See *1 Tim. 1:18; 2 Tim. 4:7; Eph. 6:10-12; 2 Cor. 10:3-5; and Acts 20:32.*

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The writers of the New Testament recognize the ecclesiological (church) fulfillment of the Joshua typology. The members of Christ's body, the church, are involved in a spiritual warfare against evil forces; nevertheless, they enjoy the rest of God's grace (*Heb. 4:9-11*) and the blessings of their spiritual inheritance.

**What do these texts say about the ultimate fulfillment of the Joshua typology?** *1 Pet. 1:4, Col. 3:24, Rev. 20:9, Rev. 21:3.*

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The final and complete fulfillment of the Joshua typology will be accomplished at the second coming of Jesus Christ (apocalyptic/eschatological aspect).

Joshua's life reflected so much of God's character that certain aspects of his life took on a prophetic character foreshadowing the activity and person of the Messiah.

For us, today, the Messiah has already come. His ministry does not need to be prefigured, but we still have the privilege of reflecting His character—the glory that Christ longed to share with His disciples (*John 17:22*) and that can become ours by contemplating the character of Christ (*2 Cor. 3:18*). The more we contemplate Jesus, the



more we reflect the beauty of His character. This is so foundational to what our daily walk with Christ should lead to. This is why time in the Word, every day, is so important. This is why, too, we should also spend time dwelling on the life and character and teachings of Jesus. By beholding, yes, we do become changed.

**Joshua, the type, asked the Israelites: "How long will you neglect to go and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers has given you?" (Josh. 18:3, NKJV). How would Jesus, the antitype of Joshua, phrase that question today?**

**FRIDAY***December 5*

**Further Thought:** "Christ's mission was not understood by the people of His time. . . . The traditions, maxims, and enactments of men hid from them the lessons which God intended to convey. These maxims and traditions became an obstacle to their understanding and practice of true religion. And when the Reality came, in the person of Christ, they did not recognize in Him the fulfillment of all their types, the substance of all their shadows. They rejected the antitype, and clung to their types and useless ceremonies. The Son of God had come, but they continued to ask for a sign. The message, 'Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,' they answered by demands for a miracle. . . . The gospel of Christ was a stumbling block to them because they demanded signs instead of a Saviour. They expected the Messiah to prove His claims by mighty deeds of conquest, to establish His empire on the ruins of earthly kingdoms. This expectation Christ answered in the parable of the sower. Not by force of

arms, not by violent interpositions, was the kingdom of God to prevail, but by the implanting of a new principle in the hearts of men.”—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 34, 35.

“The church needs faithful Calebs and Joshuas, who are ready to accept eternal life on God’s simple condition of obedience. Our churches are suffering for laborers. The world is our field. Missionaries are wanted in cities and villages that are more certainly bound by idolatry than are the pagans of the East, who have never seen the light of truth. The true missionary spirit has deserted the churches that make so exalted a profession; their hearts are no longer aglow with love for souls and a desire to lead them into the fold of Christ. We want earnest workers. Are there none to respond to the cry that goes up from every quarter: ‘Come over . . . and help us?’”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 156.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. How does biblical typology help you better understand the ministry of Jesus Christ on your behalf?
  
2. In what respect is our spiritual warfare like the conquest of Canaan, and how is it different?
  
3. Contemplate on the ultimate fulfillment of the Joshua typology. How does the picture of a world without pain, suffering, and death give us real hope in the daily struggles of life?
  
4. Joshua reflected the character of God to the extent that he foreshadowed the ministry of Christ. What are some practical ways that you can allow Jesus to reflect His character in you more completely?

## Living *in the Land*

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### SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Joshua 22; Eph. 6:7; John*

*7:24; Numbers 25; Prov. 15:1; 1 Pet. 3:8, 9.*

**Memory Text:** "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a

harsh word stirs up anger" (*Proverbs 15:1, NIV*).

**L**iving in a community can, at times, lead to disputes and tension. This is especially true in a community, such as the church, where people from different backgrounds and social strata—and sometimes brought up in completely different cultures—live and work together for a common purpose.

This week we will study Joshua 22 and a challenge that arose from a great misunderstanding among the people. At the beginning of the book, Joshua commanded some tribes to cross the Jordan and participate in the conquest, along with the tribes on the west side of the Jordan (*Josh. 1:12-18*). Now that the task is accomplished, they are free to return. However, at the west side of the Jordan, they build an altar that raises concern among the West Jordan tribes.

Why is it dangerous to jump to a rash conclusion about the behavior of others? How can we foster unity in the church? Why is it important to keep in mind the larger scope of our calling and not get caught up in distractions? These are some of the questions we are going to deal with this week.

*\*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, December 13.*

**SUNDAY**

*December 7*

**Commitment**

Read Joshua 22:1-8. What do these verses tell us about the commitment of the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh?

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Joshua affirms that the tribes from the other side of the Jordan have fully satisfied the obligations set out by Moses and himself, which meant a significant dedication to, and sacrifice on behalf of, Israel's common cause. They fought alongside their brothers for "many days," which in reality meant about six to seven years (*compare with Josh. 11:18, Josh. 14:10, Deut. 2:14*). Their wives and children were left at home, on the east side of Jordan, yet they



decided to fight loyally along with their brothers, facing the threat of injury and death in war.

These verses indirectly underline the importance of the unity of the nation and that of the land. They also prepare the way for the ensuing story, which is ultimately about unity. Will the Israelite tribes stay united, despite the strong natural border that the Jordan forms between them? Will they allow geography to set its mark on their national identity, or will they let their common worship of the only God keep them as His chosen nation, united and strong under His theocratic guidance?

Joshua explains the only way that such fidelity has been possible: they did not serve their fellow Israelites but Yahweh Himself, who charged them with their mission.

We find this same principle in the New Testament. The apostle Paul admonished Christians to render their service as if they were working for God and not only for human beings (see *Eph. 6:7, Col. 3:23, 1 Thess. 2:4*). What higher calling is there than working for, ultimately, the Creator of the cosmos?

In everyday life, we often face challenges and difficulties that can easily discourage us and make us want

to give up the fight. It's easy, at times, to do. Yet we can call upon the power of the Lord, who promises to be with us and enables us to do what He asks of us. If we keep our higher calling before us, we can be motivated to press on ahead, despite the inevitable challenges and discouragements that are part of our fallen existence here.

**Joshua 22:5, 6 reports that Joshua appealed to the departing tribes to remain faithful to the Lord, and then he blessed them. How would our relationships in the church be transformed if we prayed for each other more than we do?**

**MONDAY**

*December 8*

## **Accusations...**

Read the story of the returning tribes in Joshua 22:9-20. What accusations do the West Jordan tribes level against the East Jordan tribes? To what extent were these accusations well founded?

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In contrast with verse 1, where the tribes on the east side are called by their usual form (Reubenites, Gadites, etc.), here a different expression is used: "sons of Reuben," "sons of Gad," and "the half-tribe of Manasseh," which is in contrast to the "sons of Israel" (*Josh. 22:11, NASB*), thus representing a different entity.

In the narrative, the expression “the whole congregation of Israel” refers only to the nine and a half West Jordanian tribes, underlining the rift that developed between the two groups. Indeed, the underlying question of the ensuing story is whether the tribes on the east side of the river can be seen as Israelites.

We would expect a smooth conclusion to the story; however, tension arises as the tribes from the east are reported to have erected an altar at the Jordan. The text here does not offer any reason for the act, nor does it describe the function of the altar or specific activity related to it. The ambiguity concerning the meaning of this altar is increased even more if we observe the flashbacks to the first crossing of the Jordan, in chapters 3 and 4, where all Israel entered the edge of the Jordan to cross the river into mainland Canaan. Here a part of Israel comes to the region of the Jordan, but now to cross the river in the opposite direction.

In both cases, a structure of stones is erected. The first served as a memorial, while the second is perceived to be an impressive altar. The question that inevitably comes to mind is: “What do these stones mean?” (*compare*

with Josh 4:6, 22). Is this altar built for sacrifices, or is it only a memorial? Are these other tribes already starting to fall into apostasy?

Lack of consultation with Joshua, Eleazar, or the tribal leaders creates room for a misunderstanding that potentially can lead to terrible conflict.

**What are Jesus and Paul referring to when they admonish us to avoid judging others? Read Luke 6:37, John 7:24, 1 Cor. 4:5. Why is it so easy to jump to wrong conclusions about the motives of others?**

**TUESDAY**

*December 9*

## Haunted by the Past

Read Joshua 22:13-15 again, but now in the light of Numbers 25. Why do the Israelites choose Phinehas as the head of the delegation to the two-and-a-half tribes?

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Before giving full credit to the rumors of what might be perceived as a declaration of independence, the nine-and-a-half tribes, labeled twice as "the sons of Israel," send a delegation to clarify the intent and meaning of the altar. The delegation consisted of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar the high priest, who would succeed Eleazar after his death (*Josh. 24:33*). Phinehas already has gained some

visibility as the priest who put an end to the debauchery of Israel at Baal Peor (*Numbers 25*).

"Now when Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose from among the congregation and took a javelin in his hand; and he went after the man of Israel into the tent and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her body. So the plague was stopped among the children of Israel" (*Num. 25:7, 8, NKJV*).

Phinehas surely had some influence. The other emissaries were representatives of the nine-and-a-half tribes west of the Jordan, each being the head of a tribal family (literally, "head of his father's house"), within the clans of Israel.

The delegation opens the indictment of sacrilege and rebellion, with the official prophetic formula "thus says". The distinction here is that it is not the Lord speaking but the "whole congregation of the LORD" (*Josh. 22:16, NKJV*). They launch the accusation that Israel committed trespass, treachery, and rebellion. The term "trespass" is the same Hebrew word that was used to describe Achan's sin (*Josh. 7:1*) and appears several times in the first five

books of Moses (for example, Lev. 5:15; Lev. 6:2; Num. 5:6, 12). The examples of Achan and Baal Peor serve as precedents: one for treachery and the other for rebellion. They also express the fear of the nine-and-a-half tribes that the act of building an unauthorized altar will lead to apostasy, idolatry, and immorality, which will incur the wrath of the Lord upon the entire nation of Israel.

**We all have negative experiences from the past that will shape the way we deal with similar incidents in the future. How can God's grace help to ensure that the tragedies of our past do not determine the way we treat our neighbors in the present?**



**WEDNESDAY**

*December 10*

## **A Gentle Answer**

Read Joshua 22:21-29 in the light of Proverbs 15:1.

What can we learn from the answer of the eastern tribes?

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The answer of the accused, as straightforward and powerful as the accusation, constitutes both thematically and structurally the heart of the chapter. So far, the tribes have not replied to the accusations but instead have quietly listened to the allegations against them. Given the seriousness of the charges, their patience is exemplary as they display the true meaning of the proverb: "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger" (*Prov. 15:1, NKJV*).

The opening sentence of the defense is a string of divine names attributed to Israel's God: *El, Elohim, Yahweh* (*Josh. 22:22*). It is repeated twice with a growing force, as it becomes a solemn oath in order to dispel the doubts and false accusations that almost lead to a civil war in Israel. They are strongly convinced that God fully knows and understands the situation, and they hope that the present delegation will arrive at the same conclusion. The two-and-a-half tribes also recognize their accountability before the Lord by calling Him to take vengeance (*compare with Deut. 18:19, 1 Sam. 20:16*) if they are indeed guilty.

A surprising revelation follows, which on the one hand proves the basis of the indictment void (an altar cannot serve only as a place of sacrifice) and, on the other hand, discloses their true motivation. Fear of separation from Israel, rather than apostasy, was the true ground for their action. Thus, the building of the altar is not evidence of apostasy, as had been supposed. Actually, the contrary is true: they have acted out of fear of the Lord, just as the western Jordan tribes did. The true basis of Israel's unity is not geography or the physical extent of the inheritance

but their spiritual allegiance to the requirements of the Lord.

The genuine concern of the tribes on the west side of the river is also revealed in their authentic joy as the innocence of the tribes on the east is ascertained. Instead of feeling defeated by the arguments of their brothers, they show authentic happiness that their suspicions turned out to be wrong. Civil war in Israel was avoided and the unity of the nation preserved.

**How do you handle false accusations? Share some of the principles that guide your attitude. For inspiration, see Psalm 37:3-6, 34, 37.**

**THURSDAY**

*December 11*

## **Conflict Resolution**

**Read Joshua 22:30-34. How does this entire incident give us some insights into conflict resolution and ways of ensuring the unity of the church? (Compare with Psalm 133; John 17:20-23; 1 Pet. 3:8, 9.)**

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The story of Joshua 22 has several principles of communication that can apply to everyday human relationships in the family, church, and community.

1. When things go wrong, or seem to go wrong, the best thing to do is to communicate instead of suppressing our observations until they explode. It is good for God's people not to remain indifferent when problems seem to rise. Of course, had the Transjordanian tribes communicated

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their intent of building an altar, the whole issue could have been avoided.

2. Even if one is convinced about their judgment, do not jump to hasty conclusions. The West Jordan tribes were quick to believe the rumor that reached their ears and to draw the false conclusion that the East Jordan tribes already had apostatized.

3. Talk about the real or perceived problems before you act on your conclusions.

4. Be willing to make a sacrifice in order to achieve unity. The West Jordanian tribes were willing to give up part of their allotment to accommodate the other tribes, if being on the other side of the Jordan was the cause of their assumed apostasy.

5. When accused, falsely or rightly, give a gentle answer that turns away wrath. To answer an accusation with a counter-accusation will never lead to peace. Try to understand before attempting to be understood.

6. Rejoice and bless God when peace is re-established. It is wonderful to see that the main Israelite congregation experienced genuine joy when they learned about the true motivation of the two-and-a-half tribes. They were not so

proud of their judgment that they could not admit they were wrong in making it.

Had the East Jordan tribes apostatized, the people of Israel would have applied the requirements of the covenant. Unity can never be an argument to water down truth or give up on biblical principles. However, church discipline should always be the last (and not the first) resort, after attempts at reconciliation and pastoral assistance based on God's Word have failed. How different would our churches look if these simple principles were consistently applied!

**FRIDAY**

*December 12*

**Further Thought:** Read Ellen G. White, "The Division of Canaan," pp. 517-520, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

"While it is important on the one hand that laxness in dealing with sin be avoided, it is equally important on the other to shun harsh judgment and groundless suspicion. . . .

"The wisdom displayed by the Reubenites and their companions is worthy of imitation. While honestly seeking to promote the cause of true religion, they were misjudged and severely censured; yet they manifested no resentment. They listened with courtesy and patience to the charges of their brethren before attempting to make their defense, and then fully explained their motives and showed their innocence. Thus the difficulty which had threatened such serious consequences was amicably settled.

"Even under false accusation those who are in the right can afford to be calm and considerate. God is

acquainted with all that is misunderstood and misinterpreted by men, and we can safely leave our case in His hands. He will as surely vindicate the cause of those who put their trust in Him as He searched out the guilt of Achan. Those who are actuated by the spirit of Christ will possess that charity which suffers long and is kind.

“It is the will of God that union and brotherly love should exist among His people. The prayer of Christ just before His crucifixion was that His disciples might be one as He is one with the Father, that the world might believe that God had sent Him. This most touching and wonderful prayer reaches down the ages, even to our day; for His words were, “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word” John 17:20. While we are not to sacrifice one principle of truth, it should be our constant aim to reach this state of unity.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 519, 520.

**Discussion Questions:**



1. How can the admonition of Paul to "count others more significant than yourselves" (*Phil. 2:3, ESV*) help us to avoid surmising evil about our brothers and sisters?
  
2. Why do we often overreact to a situation because of our past failures or mistakes? How can we avoid this tendency?
  
3. Discuss the significance of listening to the viewpoint of others. How can we develop a culture of listening in our church? (*Compare with James 1:19.*)
  
4. We live in a society in which the requirements of our professional life, family responsibilities, church-related commitments, and other duties can seem overwhelming. How can the principle of doing everything as to the Lord not only make us more responsible but also bring us peace of mind?

## God Is Faithful!

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### SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Josh. 21:43-45; 2 Tim.*

*2:11-13; Joshua 23; Rev. 14:10, 19; Deut. 6:5.*

**Memory Text:** "Not one word of all the good promises that

the LORD had made to the house of Israel had failed;

all came to pass" (*Joshua 21:45, ESV*).

**W**hen John F. Kennedy addressed America at his inauguration, on January 20, 1961, his speech was only 1,366 words, but it left an indelible mark on the American mind. As he encouraged his country to focus on their responsibilities instead of their privileges, he said: "With a good conscience our only sure reward, with history the final judge of our deeds, let us go forth to lead the land we love, asking His blessing and His help, but knowing that here on earth God's work must truly be our own."

As Joshua, the aging leader of the Israelites, sensed that he was nearing the end of his life, he decided to address the leaders of the nation and the Israelites (*Joshua 23 and 24*). Joshua 23 is focused more on the future and on *how* to worship God: exclusively. Joshua 24 reviews God's faithful acts in the past, with the purpose to prompt a decision concerning *who* alone deserves to be worshipped: Yahweh.

This week, we will study together the first speech of Joshua, in which he glances back at the victories of

Israel, but at the same time traces the path of future success for Israel.

*\*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, December 20.*

**SUNDAY**

*December 14*

## All Came to Pass

In Joshua 21:43-45, what picture does the book paint of God? How do these words apply not only to the historical Promised Land but also to the reality of our salvation (2 Tim. 2:11-13)?

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These verses constitute the climax of the book and its theological summary. They highlight one of the major themes of the whole book: the covenant faithfulness of Yahweh, who keeps His promises and fulfills His oaths. This short section also summarizes the entire content of the book so far. Joshua 21:43 speaks of the allocation and settlement of the land (Joshua chapters 13-21), while Joshua 21:44 refers to victories won over the enemies and control gained

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over the land (Joshua chapters 1-12). All this retrospective is viewed through the prism of God's faithfulness. The Israelites must always remember that they can never claim the victories over their enemies or the land as their inheritance—except through God's loyalty to His given word.

He gave "all the land" (*Josh. 21:43, NKJV, emphasis added*), delivered "all their enemies into their hand" (*Josh. 21:44, NKJV, emphasis added*), and according to "all that He had sworn" (*Josh. 21:44, NKJV, emphasis added*) "all came to pass" (*Josh. 21:45, NKJV, emphasis added*). The repeated use of the word *kol*, "all," six times in three verses (*Josh. 21:43-45*), emphasizes once again the truth that the land is the gift of Yahweh, and Israel can take no credit for receiving it. It was the Lord who swore to "give" the land and who "had given" their enemies into their hands.

All Israel's success has to be solely attributed to God's divine initiative and trustworthiness. This is equally true concerning our salvation: "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own

doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast" (*Eph. 2:8, 9, ESV*).

Indeed, emphasizing God's faithfulness, Paul also wrote: "The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us; if we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself" (*2 Tim. 2:11-13, ESV*).

**How does God's faithfulness in keeping His promises give us confidence that none of His promises for the future will fail? (See *1 Cor. 10:13, 2 Cor. 1:18-20*.)**

**MONDAY**

*December 15*

## **A Sign of Concern**

The glorious conclusion of the whole section (*Josh. 21:43-45*) carries within it the fulfilled condition of obedience. Success is never to be taken for granted; it is always linked to obedience to God's Word. Thus, the allotment of the land, besides being the token of God's faithfulness to Israel (*Neh. 9:8*), creates space for an open-ended future development based on Israel's attitude. Will Israel be able to secure what has been achieved?

**Read Joshua 23:1-5. What are the major focal points of Joshua's introduction?**

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Joshua's speech moves from the old and aged speaker (emphasized twice) to the audience who will have to carry on the mission entrusted to them by God. He describes how the conquest of the land was possible: the Lord fought for them. Even though, because of their unfaithfulness and disbelief, the Israelites had to be involved in warfare after the Exodus, it was not through their military power but through God's intervention that they managed to possess the land.

God has given rest to Israel from its enemies, but there are some nations left that still have to be dispossessed. Victory is not an accomplished, unchangeable reality for Israel but an ever-present possibility by constant reliance in faithfulness on God's available help.

**What are the similarities between how the Israelites conquered Canaan under Joshua's leadership and the way Christians today can live a victorious spiritual life?** *Read Josh. 23:10, Col. 2:15, 2 Cor. 10:3-5, Eph. 6:11-18.*

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The victories of the Israelites could not be attributed to their strength and strategy. Similarly, spiritual victory over sin and temptation have been secured through the sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus Christ, but God's people today must constantly rely on the spiritual supplies provided by the Holy Spirit in order to live a triumphant life.

**With so many wonderful promises before us, why do we still find it so easy to sin?**

**TUESDAY**

*December 16*

## **Clear Boundaries**

Using the same words that were addressed to him at the beginning of the book (*Josh. 1:7, 8*), Joshua states that the task that lay ahead of Israel is not primarily military in nature. It is spiritual. It has to do with obedience to God's revealed will in the Torah.

**Why do you think Joshua took such a strong position concerning Israel's relations with the surrounding nations?**

*(Josh. 23:6-8, 12, 13).*

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The danger facing Israel is not the threat of the remaining nations' animosity but the risk of their friendship. Their weapons might not represent any challenge

to Israel; however, their ideology and values (or counter-values) could prove to be more harmful than any military force. Joshua draws the attention of the leaders to the crucial fact that the conflict they have been involved in is first, and ultimately, spiritual. Therefore, Israel has to maintain its unique identity.

The prohibition of invoking the name of a god, swearing by it, and serving or bowing to it has to do with idolatry. In the ancient Near East, the name of a deity represented his/her presence and power. Invoking or mentioning the names of foreign gods in everyday greetings or business transactions meant recognizing their authority and helped lead the Israelites to seek their power in time of need (*compare with Judg. 2:1-3, 11-13*).

The danger of intermarriage with the remaining Canaanites consisted in losing Israel's spiritual purity. The intent of Joshua's admonition is not to promote racial or ethnic purity, but rather to avoid idolatry, which can lead to the spiritual collapse of Israel. The case of Solomon is a dramatic example of the sad spiritual consequences of intermarriage (*1 Kings 3:1, 1 Kings 11:1-8*); in the New Testament, Christians are openly warned

against seeking marital relationships with nonbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14), although, in the case of existing marriages, Paul does not advise divorce from the unbelieving spouse but calls them to live an exemplary Christian life in hope of winning the spouse to the Lord (1 Cor. 7:12-16).

**Joshua's warning against harmful associations inevitably leads to the question of the Christian's relationship to the "world." How can we find a balanced relationship with the society that surrounds us?**

**WEDNESDAY***December 17*

## The Anger of the Lord

How should we interpret the descriptions of God's wrath and retributive justice in Joshua (*Josh. 23:15, 16*) and elsewhere in Scripture? (See also *Num. 11:33; 2 Chron. 36:16; Rev. 14:10, 19; Rev. 15:1.*)

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Israel already has experienced the Lord's anger during the wilderness wanderings (*Num. 11:33, Num. 12:9*), as well as in the Promised Land (*Josh. 7:1*), and was fully aware of the consequences of provoking Yahweh's anger by flagrantly breaking the covenant. These verses represent the climax of the severity of Joshua's rhetoric. It is shocking to hear that the Lord will destroy Israel, as the same term has been previously used to refer to the annihilation of the

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Canaanites. As surely as the promises of the Lord have been faithfully fulfilled concerning Israel's blessing, the curses of the covenant (*Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 28*) will also become true if the Israelites reject the covenant. In light of the dispossession and destruction of the Canaanites, these verses demonstrate once again that Yahweh is ultimately the judge of all the earth. He declares war against sin, irrespective of where it is found. Israel was not sanctified, and did not acquire special merits, through participation in holy war any more than pagan nations did when they later became the means of Yahweh's judgment against the chosen nation.

It lies within Israel's power of choice to make the glorious certainties of the past the foundation for facing the future.

At first glance, the biblical teaching on God's anger seems to be incompatible with the affirmation that God is love (*John 3:16, 1 John 4:8*). Yet, it is exactly in the light of God's wrath that the biblical doctrine of God's love becomes even more relevant. First, the Bible presents God as loving, patient, long-suffering, and ready to forgive (*Exod. 34:6, Mic. 7:18*). However, in the context of

a world affected by sin, the wrath of the Lord is the attitude of His holiness and righteousness when confronted by sin and evil. His wrath is never an emotional, revengeful, unpredictable overreaction. The New Testament teaches that Christ became sin for us (*2 Cor. 5:21*), and, through His death, we have been reconciled with God (*Rom. 5:10*). Whoever believes in Him will not have to face God's wrath (*John 3:36, Eph. 2:3, 1 Thess. 1:10*). The concept of the wrath of God presents God as the righteous judge of the universe and the One who upholds the cause of justice (*Ps. 7:11, Ps. 50:6, 2 Tim. 4:8*).



**THURSDAY***December 18***Cling to God**

The only way Israel will be able to avoid the temptation of idolatry and the wrath of God is not by constantly remembering the "don'ts" of the covenant, but by fostering a conscious and consistent allegiance to the Lord. The same verb, "to cleave, adhere" to the Lord (see *Deut. 4:4*), is also used to describe the marriage covenant that was intended between wife and husband (*Gen. 2:24*) or the loyalty of Ruth to Naomi (*Ruth 1:14*). It is important to note that, according to Joshua's evaluation, such faithfulness has characterized Israel as a nation "to this day." Unfortunately, the same assertion will not be true for later periods of Israel's history, as the book of Judges sadly demonstrates (*Judg. 2:2, 7, 11; Judg. 3:7, 12; Judg. 4:1, etc.*)

**Joshua appeals to Israel to love the Lord their God**

(*Josh. 23:11; compare with Deut. 6:5*). **Love cannot be**

forced; otherwise, it will cease to be what it essentially is. Yet in what sense can love be commanded?

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In order for Israel to continually enjoy the blessings of the covenant, they will have to stay loyal to God. The Hebrew is extremely emphatic: "Be very careful for the sake of your own soul." The word *'ahaba*, "love," can refer to a wide range of human affections, including friendly attachment, sexual intimacy, maternal tenderness, romantic love, and loyalty to God. If we understand love for God as a conscious commitment and devotion to Him, it can be enjoined without violating its true nature (*compare with John 13:34*). God always intended that obedience to His commands should spring from a personal relationship with Him (*Exod. 19:4 ["I . . . brought you to Myself," NKJV], Deut. 6:5, compare with Matt. 22:37*) based on what He has done for them in His great mercy and love.

The command to love God also expresses the mutual, but not symmetrical, nature of divine love. God desires to enter into an intimate, personal relationship with every person who reciprocates His love. Thus, His universal love to all constitutes the framework for the manifestation of our voluntary, mutual love.

**Jesus gave a new commandment to His disciples. In what sense was this commandment new and old at the same time?**

*Read John 13:34, John 15:17, and 1 John 3:11; compare with Lev. 19:18.*

**FRIDAY**

*December 19*

**Further Thought:** Read Ellen G. White, "The Last Words of Joshua," pp. 521, 522, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

"Satan deceives many with the plausible theory that God's love for His people is so great that He will excuse sin in them; he represents that while the threatenings of God's word are to serve a certain purpose in His moral government, they are never to be literally fulfilled. But in all His dealings with His creatures God has maintained the principles of righteousness by revealing sin in its true character—by demonstrating that its sure result is misery and death. The unconditional pardon of sin never has been, and never will be. Such pardon would show the abandonment of the principles of righteousness, which are the very foundation of the government of God. It would fill the unfallen universe with consternation. God has faithfully pointed out the results of sin, and if these warnings were not true, how could we be sure

that His promises would be fulfilled? That so-called benevolence which would set aside justice is not benevolence but weakness.

“God is the life-giver. From the beginning all His laws were ordained to life. But sin broke in upon the order that God had established, and discord followed. So long as sin exists, suffering and death are inevitable. It is only because the Redeemer has borne the curse of sin in our behalf that man can hope to escape, in his own person, its dire results.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 522.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Review the evidence of God's faithfulness in your life. What can you point to? At the same time, how do you respond when things haven't gone as you have hoped or prayed for, or when claimed promises are met with silence?
2. Discuss the biblical teaching about God's anger. How would you present the wrath of the Lord as part of the good news?

3. What principles can you gather from this week's lesson regarding association with unbelievers? How can we balance having clear boundaries in terms of our principles and practices while mingling with people to serve them and to look out for their well-being?

4. What are some of the obstacles that prevent you from clinging to the Lord with all your heart?

## Choose This Day!

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### SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Joshua 24; Gen. 12:7; Deut. 17:19; Deut. 5:6; 1 Kings 11:2, 4, 9; 2 Tim. 4:7, 8.*

**Memory Text:** "And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve . . . But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (*Joshua 24:15, NKJV*).

**T**he final chapter of Joshua is set in the context of a covenant renewal ceremony, but this time conducted by the aged leader of Israel. Although not a covenant itself but rather a report of a covenant renewal ceremony, the chapter has the elements of ancient Near Eastern suzerainty treaties: (1) a preamble in which the suzerain, the initiator of the treaty, is identified; (2) the historical prologue, which describes the relationship between the overlord and the vassal; (3) the covenant stipulations asking the vassal to manifest total allegiance to the suzerain based on, and motivated by, gratitude; (4) blessings for obedience and curses for breaking the covenant; (5) witnesses to the pledge of the vassal; (6) deposition of the document for future reading; and (7) ratification of the covenant.

Joshua is close to the end of his life; no replacement is on the horizon. The covenant renewal is a reminder to Israel that their king is Yahweh Himself and that, if they remain loyal to Him, they will enjoy His protection. Israel does not need a human king. As a theocratic nation, they have to ever keep in mind that their only king is the Lord.



*\*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, December 27.*

**SUNDAY**

*December 21*

**You Were There!**

"Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem and called for the elders of Israel, for their heads, for their judges, and for their officers; and they presented themselves before God" (*Josh. 24:1, NKJV*).

Shechem was the place where Abraham had built an altar upon his arrival in the land, and where God first gave him the promise of the land (*Gen. 12:7*). Now, when the promises given to Abraham have been fulfilled, Israel renews the covenant with God at the very place where the first promise had first been given. The appeal of Joshua recalls the words of Jacob to "put away the foreign gods which are among you" (*Josh. 24:23, NKJV; compare with Gen. 35:2-4*). The geography of the event in and of itself conveys the call to demonstrate undivided loyalty to the Lord, rejecting all other "gods."

**Read Joshua 24:2-13. What is the main thrust of God's message to Israel?**

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God is the main subject of the reviewed past: "I took," "I gave," "I sent," "I plagued," "I did," "I brought you out," "I delivered you," etc. Israel is not the main protagonist of the narrative but rather its object. It is God who created Israel. Had not God intervened in the life of Abraham, they would have been serving the same idols. Israel's existence as a nation is not the merit of any of its ancestors but the exclusive work of God's grace. The fact that the Israelites are settled in the land is not a ground for boasting but the very reason why they should serve God.

The Lord's speech contains a shift that occurs five times between "you" and "they" (the fathers). The fathers and this generation at Shechem are treated as one. Joshua is seeking to show what Moses affirmed already in

Deuteronomy 5:3, that the Lord did not make the covenant only with the fathers but with all those present at the moment of Joshua's speech. The vast majority there now had not experienced the Exodus. Not "all" of them were at Horeb. Yet Joshua says that all of them were there. In short, the lessons of the past must be appropriated by each new generation. The God who worked for the ancestors in the past is ready to act on behalf of the present generation.

**What are ways in which we can, as a church, have a better sense of corporate responsibility; that is, grasp the idea that what we do impacts everyone in the church?**

**MONDAY**

*December 22*

## **In Sincerity and Truth**

**What did Joshua appeal to the Israelites to do? (*Josh. 24:14, 15*). What does it mean to serve the Lord in sincerity and in truth?**

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Joshua's appeal clearly expresses the fact that Israel has to decide to either, through loyalty to their Creator, keep their uniqueness and live in the land, or to fade back into being one among many idolatrous peoples, with no clear identity, purpose, or mission. The choice is theirs.

Joshua's appeal is twofold: Israel should fear the Lord and serve Him "in sincerity and in truth." To fear the Lord does not mean a life of perpetual trembling and emotional insecurity. It rather refers to the reverence and

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awe that stem from the recognition of the unfathomable greatness, holiness, and infinity of God on the one hand, and our smallness, sinfulness, and finitude on the other. To fear God is a constant awareness of the magnitude of His demands, a recognition that He is not only our heavenly Father but also our Divine King. Such awareness will lead to a life of obedience to God (*Lev. 19:14, Lev. 25:17, Deut. 17:19, 2 Kings 17:34*). While "fear" describes the inner attitude that must characterize an Israelite, the practical outcome of reverence to God is service.

The service that is required of Israel is characterized by two Hebrew terms: "in sincerity" and "in truth." The first term (*tamim*) is mostly used as an adjective to describe the perfection of the sacrificial animal. The second term that describes Israel's service is "truth," or "faithfulness" (Heb. *'emet*). The term generally connotes constancy and stability. It usually refers to God, whose character is intrinsically characterized by faithfulness, which is manifested toward Israel.

A faithful person is somebody who is dependable and trustworthy. Basically, Joshua is asking Israel to demonstrate the same loyalty to God that God has displayed

toward His people in the course of their history. It is not merely outward compliance to His requirements but what springs from an undivided inner consistency of the heart. Their lives should reflect gratefulness to God for what He has done for them. Basically, it is how we today should relate to Jesus as well.

**What does it mean to you to serve the Lord "in sincerity" and "in truth"? What are some of the distracting factors in your life that prevent your full devotion to God?**

**TUESDAY***December 23***Free to Serve**

As a true and faithful leader, Joshua respects the free will of his people and wishes that Israel would serve the Lord out of free choice rather than compulsion. That was exactly the point made by the deliberate use of the verb "chosen" (see *Josh. 24:22*) In other passages *bakhar*, "to choose," describes Yahweh's election of Israel (*Deut. 7:6, 7; Deut. 10:15; Deut. 14:2*). Israel is free to say "no" to Yahweh after their divine election, but that would be nonsensical and absurd. Israel can say "yes" to God and continue to live, or they can turn their backs on Him and cease to exist.

**What was Israel's response to Joshua's appeal?** (*Josh. 24:16-18*). **Why do you think Joshua reacted to their answer in the way he did?** (*Josh. 24:19-21*).



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In their categorically positive answer, the Israelites recognize that the God of the patriarchs and of their fathers is now also "our God" (*Josh. 24:17, 18, NKJV*), whom they are willing to serve with undivided allegiance. After such an unquestionable affirmation of their loyalty, we would expect words of affirmation and encouragement from Joshua. However, this is not the case. The dialogue between Joshua and the people takes a radical turn in which Joshua seems to play the role of the devil's advocate. He shifts from speaking about God's gracious providence in the past to threatening the Israelites with a picture of a God who is not easy to serve.

Joshua knows the instability of the first generation, who promised to obey God in similar terms (*Exod. 19:8, Exod. 24:3, Deut. 5:27*), yet who forgot their promises while the words were still on their lips (*Exodus 32*). Thus, Joshua, by means of rhetoric, wants to make the Israelites aware of several things. *First*, the decision to serve God is a serious one. It will have to shape the entire nation

according to God's revelation. The blessings of pursuing that goal are evident, but the consequences of disobedience must also be fully understood. Forgiveness of sins is not an inalienable right of humanity but a miracle of God's grace.

*Second*, the decision of the Israelites to serve God must be their own decision, not something imposed by a leader, even Joshua.

*Third*, Israel must realize that humans cannot serve God in their own strength. Serving God is not achieved by a mechanical adherence to the stipulations of the covenant but by a personal relationship with the saving Lord (*compare with Exod. 20:1, 2; Deut. 5:6, 7*).

**WEDNESDAY***December 24*

## The Dangers of Idolatry

Read Joshua 24:22-24. Why would Joshua need to repeat his appeal to the Israelites to get rid of their idols?

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The threat of idolatry is not a theoretical one. Earlier, on the plains of Moab, in a similar context, Moses asked for the same decision (*Deut. 30:19, 20*). The gods that are in view now are not the ones of Egypt or those beyond the river, but they are found "among them." Therefore, Joshua pleads with his people to incline their hearts to the Lord. The Hebrew term used here, *natah*, means "to stretch," "to bend." It describes a God who is expected to bend down and listen to prayers (*2 Kings 19:16, Ps. SE-4Q-2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua, by Barna Magyarosi*

31:2, 3, *Dan. 9:18*), and it is also the attitude required of Israel later by the prophets (*Isa. 55:3, Jer. 7:24*). It is employed to indicate the apostasy of Solomon when his heart inclined toward foreign gods (*1 Kings 11:2, 4, 9*). The sinful human heart does not have the natural tendency to bend and listen to God's voice. It takes conscious decisions on our part to incline it toward fulfilling God's will.

The Israelites' answer literally reads: "We will listen to His voice." This expression emphasizes the relational aspect of obedience. Israel is not asked to routinely follow lifeless rules. The covenant is about a living relationship with the Lord, which cannot be fully expressed by mere regulations. Israel's religion was never intended to be legalistic; rather it was to be a constant conversation in faith and love with a holy and merciful Savior.

Even after the people's threefold promise to serve the Lord, which implies, as Joshua commanded, the removal of foreign gods from among them, there is no report that it actually happened. Throughout the entire book, it became customary to report on the fulfillment of Joshua's commands

(or those of Moses) as examples of obedience. The lack of it now at the end of the book leaves the plea of Joshua open-ended. The central appeal of the book to serve the Lord is not only for Joshua's generation but also for each new generation of God's people who would read or hear this message.

**How often have you promised the Lord you would do something but then you didn't? Why didn't you? What does your answer tell you about grace?**

**THURSDAY***December 25*

## Finishing Well

Read the concluding words of the book of Joshua written by an inspired editor (*Josh. 24:29-33*). How are these words not only looking back to Joshua's life but also looking forward to the future?

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In the epilogue reporting on the deaths of Joshua and Eleazar, the high priest brings the book of Joshua to a sobering end. By recounting together the burial of Joshua, the burial of Eleazar, and the burial of Joseph's bones, the author creates a contrast between the life outside the land and the beginning of life in the land. There is no need to wander anymore. The earthly remains of the leaders don't have to be carried along with them. The patriarchs

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buried their relatives in a cave (*Gen. 23:13, 19; Gen. 25:9, 10*), on a plot purchased at Shechem (*Gen. 33:19*). Now the nation buries its leaders in the territory of their own inheritance, thus having a sense of permanence. The promises given to the patriarchs have been fulfilled. Yahweh's faithfulness constitutes the historical thread that links Israel's posterity to its present and future.

As the concluding paragraphs of the book link the whole narrative to a larger story in the past, they also open the way for the future. Ex-archbishop of Canterbury Lord George Cury, in a keynote speech delivered at Holy Trinity Church in Shrewsbury, declared that the Anglican Church was "one generation away from extinction."

In fact, the church is always one generation away from extinction, and so it was with the Old Testament people of God. A great chapter in the history of Israel comes to an end. Its future depends on what kind of answers it will give to the many questions that concern the future. Will Israel be loyal to the Lord? Will they be able to continue the unfinished task of possessing the whole land? Will they be able to cling to Yahweh and not get entangled in idol worship? A generation under Joshua has been faithful to the

Lord, but will the next generation maintain the same spiritual direction that has been traced by its great leader? Each successive generation of God's people, reading the book of Joshua, must face these same questions. Their success depends on the nature of the answers they provide in their everyday lives and how they relate to the truths they have inherited.

**Joshua, like Paul, "fought the good fight" (2 Tim. 4:7, NKJV). What was the key to Joshua's success? What decisions do you need to make today in order to finish with the same assurance of salvation?**



**FRIDAY***December 26*

**Further Thought:** Read Ellen G. White, "The Last Words of Joshua," pp. 522-524, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

"Among the multitudes that came up out of Egypt were many who had been worshipers of idols; and such is the power of habit that the practice was secretly continued, to some extent, even after the settlement in Canaan. Joshua was sensible of this evil among the Israelites, and he clearly perceived the dangers that would result. He earnestly desired to see a thorough reformation among the Hebrew host. He knew that unless the people took a decided stand to serve the Lord with all their hearts, they would continue to separate themselves farther and farther from Him. . . . While a portion of the Hebrew host were spiritual worshipers, many were mere formalists; no zeal or earnestness characterized their service. Some were idolators at heart, who would be ashamed to acknowledge themselves

as such.”—Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, May 19, 1881.

“This solemn covenant was recorded in the book of the law, to be sacredly preserved. Joshua then set up a great stone under an oak that was by the sanctuary of the Lord. ‘And Joshua said unto all the people, Behold this stone shall be a witness unto us; for it hath heard all the words of the Lord which he spake unto us: it shall be therefore a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God.’ Here Joshua plainly declares that his instructions and warnings to the people were not his own words, but the words of God. This great stone would stand to testify to succeeding generations of the event which it was set up to commemorate, and would be a witness against the people, should they ever again degenerate into idolatry.”—Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, May 26, 1881.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. **Discuss the meaning of the expression: “He [the LORD] is a holy God. He is a jealous God”** (*Josh. 24:19, NKJV*). **In what sense is God a jealous God?**

2. How is our love for God connected to the freedom of choice He grants us? That is, could we truly love if we didn't truly have freedom? Can true love ever be forced? If not, why not?

3. What are some practical ways that leaders of the church today can pass on the torch to the next generation?

4. Think about the life of Joshua and the conclusion that in all his life the Israelites served the Lord. What conclusion would you like people to draw about your life?