
The Read, Pray and Grow (RPG)
is a daily Bible reading material
published by
Tabernacle Books,
Singapore.

The PDA version is
freely downloadable from
www.truthbpc.com/rpg.html

**October to December
2023**

“The Book of Joshua”

*by
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About the Author



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LORD'S DAY, OCTOBER 1

JOSHUA 1:1-4

PROVERBS 10:27-32

“The fear of the LORD prolongeth days...”

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF JOSHUA

The book of Joshua is a historical book. It is the first of the books classified as history up to the book of Esther. It comes after the first five books commonly called “The Law.” The title of this book comes from the main character of the book, Joshua. According to Numbers 13:16, Joshua’s Hebrew name was “Oshea,” meaning “salvation,” and Moses had changed his name to “Jehoshua” meaning “Yahweh is salvation.” It is also the Hebrew name for Jesus. This book gives a clear picture of Christ as Lord and Saviour. Joshua is a type of Christ.

Authorship: Joshua is the author of the book as it is attributed to him in Joshua 24:26: *“And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God, and took a great stone, and set it up there under an oak, that was by the sanctuary of the LORD.”* He also wrote as an eyewitness of the events described in the book. Born in Egypt, he witnessed the accounts in the book of Exodus. In Joshua 5:1 and 6, he spoke of his experience in these words: *“And it came to pass, when all the kings of the Amorites, which were on the side of Jordan westward, and all the kings of the Canaanites, which were by the sea, heard that the LORD had dried up the waters of Jordan from before the children of Israel, until we were passed over, that their heart melted, neither was there spirit in them any more, because of the children of Israel... For the children of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, till all the people that were men of war, which came out of Egypt, were consumed...”* Joshua belonged to that generation that perished in the wilderness, but he and Caleb were not among those who had rebelled against Moses and God. Both were among the twelve spies whom Moses had sent. They were the only two who had urged the people to go immediately and occupy the land of Canaan by faith. It was then that God promised that He would allow them to see and live in Canaan. That experience forms the content of this book.

THOUGHT: Historical records are instructions by example.

PRAYER: Father, may my life be a worthy example that will teach future generations.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 2

JOSHUA 1:1-4

COLOSSIANS 3:14-17

*“And whatsoever ye do in word or deed,
do all in the name of the Lord Jesus...”*

THE UNITY OF THE BOOK AND TIME

The book of Joshua reflects unity of style and organisation, suggesting single authorship. Joshua, an assistant to Moses, was faithful and courageous. He was dedicated to God and His Word. He met all the required qualifications to be a successor of Moses. He learned from Moses, even in putting his life events in writing, as led by the Spirit. He might not have imagined the far-reaching importance of his writing in blessing future generations.

The Time of Joshua: Since Joshua lived at the time of the Exodus, the date of the book would not be far from the dates of those of Moses. The events recorded in this book can be divided according to three geographical settings. The first is by River Jordan (Joshua 1-5). The second is in the land of Canaan (Joshua 6:1-13:7). The third is the twelve tribes on both sides of River Jordan (Joshua 13:8-24:33). In the first setting, Joshua took over the leadership from Moses. His first task was to lead Israel in crossing River Jordan and preparation for war west of River Jordan.

Joshua was a military strategist as much as God had granted him that wisdom. When he was incapacitated, God was there for him. His campaign began in central Canaan, then south and finally north. Every victory and method used in the conquest is recorded in the book. When the portion of land was reclaimed, Joshua divided it amongst the twelve tribes of Israel mainly by casting lots. The tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh had already received their portion east of River Jordan as allowed by God upon their request. When he had completed the division of the land, he was also tasked with assigning six cities of refuge, three on each side of River Jordan. The Levites who did not have their own inheritance were given forty-eight cities among all the tribes. This was done according to the commandment of God. The date of these events covers about fifteen years from 1405 BC to 1390 BC. Joshua died in that final year at the age of 110.

THOUGHT: When God is in command, all things are sure.

PRAYER: Father, grant me wisdom and courage as those of Joshua.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 3

JOSHUA 1:1-4

ROMANS 8:2-4

*“That the righteousness of the law
might be fulfilled in us...”*

SERVANT OF THE LORD?

The phrase “servant of the LORD” has been used too readily by God’s people today that it has lost its true significance. When we introduce a speaker, we say, “God’s servant, Rev so-and-so, will be bringing God’s Word today.” We receive the title “servant of God” too flippantly, not realising how difficult it was for Joshua to “earn” the title “servant of the LORD” from God!

In Joshua 1:1, God introduced us to Joshua as “*Moses’ minister*” (i.e. one who waits on Moses). But in Joshua 1:2, God called Moses “*my servant*” (i.e. slave). As a servant of Moses, Joshua did not qualify to be called God’s servant until he had proven himself. His time of serving under the shadow as a servant of Moses was over. He had to step out of Moses’ shadow and stand for the LORD to lead God’s people into the remaining portion of the Promised Land. If he failed, he would remain as Moses’ minister.

The mission was difficult. He had to trust God by crossing the fast-overflowing Jordan to conquer the Land filled with many nations. These nations had armies who were like giants and seasoned fighters. Israel comprised men who came out of the wilderness. None of them were trained soldiers. To lead God’s people into the Promised Land against a formidable foe (like the allied Canaanite troops) was humanly impossible. Joshua had to prove himself by leading God’s people to defeat the Canaanites by trusting in the LORD. The battle was spiritual rather than physical, even though many Canaanites died. Thank God Joshua succeeded. God finally called Joshua the servant (i.e. slave) of the LORD. Joshua 24:29: “*And it came to pass after these things, that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being an hundred and ten years old.*” Joshua took a life time of faithful service to “earn” the title of “*servant of the LORD.*”

THOUGHT: Are you a servant of the LORD?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help me to be faithful all the days of my life to be called a servant of the LORD, for Jesus’ sake.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 4

JOSHUA 1:1-9

NUMBERS 27:15-23

*“Take thee Joshua the son of Nun,
a man in whom is the spirit,
and lay thine hand upon him...”*

THE COMMISSIONING OF JOSHUA

God spoke to Joshua as He had spoken to Moses. When Moses died, God had already appointed Joshua to succeed Moses. God spoke to Joshua to charge him and commission him for the task ahead of him. This personal touch was necessary in order to place that weighty duty on him. The task ahead of him was to lead Israel and settle them in the land of Canaan. God reaffirmed His promise to give the land to Israel. He charged Joshua to be courageous and to hold to the book of the Law. In this, he would fulfil his commission perfectly.

Moses died in Mount Nebo in the land of Moab (Deut 34:5). The burden of leading Israel fell on the shoulders of Joshua. Earlier, God had commanded Moses to set Joshua before Eleazar the priest, and he laid his hands upon Joshua and gave him a charge. Joshua was all set to lead Israel when the time came. God then addressed him personally, as the text says, *“Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel”* (Josh 1:2). The immediate task was to cross the Jordan River to Canaan. Moab was to the east of Canaan. Naturally, Israel would have entered Canaan from the west. However, during the forty-year migration, they were led to the east. That approach must have been strategic, for the nations were informed of all the works of God since Israel left Egypt. Joshua was human as everyone else and it would not be surprising if he would yield to any kind of temptation to go against God’s commandment. Aaron was second in command to Moses and he was not able to resist the temptation. He followed the multitude to transgress in the matter of the golden calf. Joshua could have also easily fallen into such temptation. However, God had given Joshua special grace so that he was able to stand. He was faithful as a minister of Moses and no wrongdoing was recorded in his service. God, however, saw it fit to prepare him personally. Observing from the side is different from being personally engaged in the service. The people waited for his word before making any move. God was with him.

THOUGHT: How is God preparing leaders today?

PRAYER: Father, grant me the grace to lead as Joshua led.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 5

JOSHUA 1:1-9

PSALM 37:3-7

*“Rest in the LORD,
and wait patiently for him...”*

GOD REPEATED HIS PROMISE TO JOSHUA

God spoke with emphasis in His speech. He was specific in repeating the promise: *“Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses”* (Josh 1:3). This was as if God said, “Surely I will give you the land.” He described the boundary of the land. It was a description similar to a modern surveyor’s language. Even in the subsequent division of the land, there was a manifestation of survey skill. God described the boundaries in all the four corners, east, west, north and south. It was from the boundary of Lebanon to River Euphrates and the land of the Hittites and the Great Sea in the west.

In the midst of the description, God again reaffirmed to Joshua that no man would stand before him. The land that he was asked to enter and settle Israel in was not idle. There were people living in it and they had cities with high walls. They were also huge in stature. They tilled the land and also kept livestock. They would not be willing to give up their land to Israel without putting up a fight. This was where Joshua needed encouragement and assurance of victory. Though God had promised to be with him, the victory would not come on a silver platter. These are the words of encouragement that God gave to Joshua: *“There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I sware unto their fathers to give them”* (Josh 1:5-6). Joshua was no coward. He took in the words of God and trusted God to guide him. In his leadership, he had to be a military strategist. The victory in any war begins with winning the psychological war. This is the preparation of the heart. Once the heart is set on victory, the battle is half won. Joshua had a heart of courage from God. The second phase of warfare is actual combat.

THOUGHT: God is the Source of courage and victory.

PRAYER: Father, give me a heart that consistently fulfils my duties.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 6

JOSHUA 1:1-9

DANIEL 3:16-25

“...our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us....”

GOD CHARGED JOSHUA TO TAKE A STAND

Every soldier knows that in the battlefield, life and death are the only two options. More often than not, there will be casualties on both sides of the conflict. However, in the case of Joshua, there was a promise of full victory, and there would be no casualties on his side as God had promised. In one instance recorded later in Scripture, Jonathan (the son of Saul) and his helper were able to scare away the enemy and killed some, not by military might but by wise strategy (1 Sam 14:1ff.). Wisdom in such situations comes from God. God has many options in bringing to pass His desired end. He had placed these at the disposal of Joshua in His promise and words of encouragement. He wanted Joshua to march on without doubt. When God is in the battle, victory is sure.

The most important tool that God placed before Joshua was the book of the Law. While courage was required, truth cannot be cast aside. God told Joshua to observe and do according to all that He had commanded through Moses. He told him not to turn to the right hand or to the left so that he would prosper wherever he went. Jesus says that He is the Truth. God's Law is truth. If Joshua would adhere to this truth, he would not stray in any way. God's statement here is the key to Joshua's success: *“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success”* (Josh 1:8). This is indeed the formula for all success. Joshua was thus prepared to fulfil his mission.

Joshua had proven himself as a worthy leader. He had learned much from Moses and then he was a leader himself. He needed this encouragement to prove himself worthy of the task ahead of him. Joshua, as a servant of God, did not hesitate to embrace the charge of God, and he was successful. Come to the Saviour, and He will do great things in your life.

THOUGHT: Every believer has a duty to God.

PRAYER: Father, grant me satisfaction in serving Thee.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 7

JOSHUA 1:10-18

PSALM 16

*“The LORD is the portion
of mine inheritance...”*

JOSHUA SET TO ENTER CANAAN

After the commissioning of Joshua, he was set to enter Canaan as the leader of Israel. He began his work proper in commanding the tribes west of Jordan. Those who had settled in the east of Jordan were also required to fulfil their promise to Moses to help their brethren to settle in Canaan. All of them were in one accord and they obeyed Joshua. Thus they were set to occupy that land that they had waited to enter for a long time. God was now bringing His promise to pass. Joshua was instrumental in the fulfilment of this long-awaited hope of the nation. His trust was unfailing.

Joshua Commanded the Tribes: These were the tribes that were designated to occupy the land of Canaan proper. There were now eight-and-a-half tribes because the tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh had been given land east of Jordan. Also, the tribe of Levi was not going to have any inheritance, but was to be given forty-eight cities within the portions of all the tribes. It was three days before they were to cross River Jordan, and Joshua commanded the officers of the people to announce to the people to be ready. That call was actually a declaration of war against the Canaanites. Israel knew that the occupation of the land would not come on a silver platter.

During the exodus under Moses, Israel had to fight the Amalekites and also the kings of the Amorites. They won, and the land was given to the two-and-a-half tribes. In addition to arming themselves, they were to prepare necessary supplies for their children and wives, as well as for their livestock. Under Moses, Israel had established a functional chain of command through the advice of Jethro, Moses' father-in-law (Exod 18). The command of Joshua was easily carried out through that established system. They were going to cross River Jordan to possess the land that God had given them. The presence of God among them was still evident. Since they had not completed their journey, God still continued to guide them in their movement.

THOUGHT: A leader whom God appoints is filled with the Spirit.

PRAYER: Father, may I persevere in my service for Thee.

LORD'S DAY, OCTOBER 8

JOSHUA 1:10-18

NUMBERS 32:25-28

*“But thy servants will pass over,
every man armed for war,
before the LORD...”*

JOSHUA SHOWED HIS AUTHORITY

The supply of manna continued and they gathered manna every morning. In addition, their clothes and shoes did not wear out all those years since they left Egypt. God faithfully supplied those needs. This was also a constant reminder that their journey was ordered by God.

Israel had to obey the servants whom God had appointed to lead them. Joshua had witnessed some of the rebellions against God and Moses during the Exodus. He was cautious of a possibility of another rebellion, so he had to do everything to stamp his authority. He gave the commands to the officers, and his orders were obeyed. He needed to do everything as God had charged him. Joshua was thus prepared.

Joshua Ordered the Tribes East of River Jordan: Joshua took over from where Moses had left. The arrangement with the two-and-a-half tribes that were to occupy the land east of River Jordan was to continue. Joshua had to give a special command to them that they should do their part as they had promised Moses in the presence of Joshua and Eleazar the priest. It was a pledge that they had no right to turn away from obeying. When Joshua gave orders for the preparation to cross River Jordan, his message to those tribes was that the time had come for them to fulfil their pledge. The order primarily was to the men of war who were able-bodied to go and fight. Joshua, in giving to them the orders, was in fact announcing the commencement of war. It was God who had ordered them to go to Canaan and they would go to war at God's orders.

When God told them to get out of Egypt, they did not have an organised army. Moses had no experience in war, nor in leading the people and defeating the Egyptians. He simply became an instrument because God was the One who fought for them. Israel had seen the powerful Egyptian army drown in the Red Sea. Hebrews 11, in recalling these events, attributed them to faith.

THOUGHT: Courage and righteousness fortify any leadership.

PRAYER: Father, give me courage as I perform my duties for Thee.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 9

JOSHUA 1:10-18

JOHN 14:15

*“When we ask anything in Christ’s name,
He will do it.”*

JOSHUA TAUGHT HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY

Joshua had to refresh the people’s memory of all those instances where God led them with a mighty hand. He needed to assure the tribes of Israel that as they do their part, God would fulfil His part in granting them victory.

Canaan was an expansive land and each tribe had to be allocated their own place. The task before Joshua was monumental. It has been estimated that the population of Israel at that time was about two million. The tribes that had been given land east of River Jordan were to leave their families in their settlements, and go to war with all the other tribes till each tribe was settled. The unity of the nation had to be sustained and that responsibility was placed on Joshua. The logic of having everybody on board was to maximise their capabilities and ensure that they win, leaving nothing to chance. All through the Scripture, the principle of the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man is emphasised. Joshua had to ensure that the people do what they were commanded. They were thus set to move into action.

All Israel Obeyed the Command of Joshua: The people told Joshua that they would do what he commanded them. They also pledged that anyone who would not obey would be put to death. This reflected their seriousness in sustaining their unity in order to conquer the land. They all knew that rebels were severely punished. They encouraged Joshua and all were set to move.

The dawn of entering Canaan had come. The position of Joshua was all the more important. He was endued with the Spirit of God and was ready to fulfil God’s assignment. God also made the hearts of Israel willing to obey him. God was now fulfilling what had taken forty years to achieve. When God guides, every venture is successful. When we ask God anything in Christ’s name, He will do it (John 16:23).

THOUGHT: Success comes when God’s people are obedient.

PRAYER: Help me, Father, to follow the courage of Joshua in winning souls to salvation.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 10

JOSHUA 2

HEBREWS 11:30-31

“...she had received the spies with peace.”

JOSHUA IS SET TO ENTER CANAAN

When Joshua had made all the preparations to enter Canaan, the first city they needed to capture was Jericho. He sent spies into the city, and they found faith in God in the least expected person. She was a harlot named Rahab. She protected the spies in their mission and revealed her faith in the God of Israel. In their interaction, they were able to come to some agreement. In the end, they swore to protect her and her family when they captured Jericho. The spies eventually returned to Joshua and reported the success of their mission. This is the narrative of that preparation.

Rahab and the Captured Jericho: Joshua was knowledgeable in war strategy and he needed to gather information in the enemy territory. The first line of winning a war is to create fear in the heart of the enemy. That was the aim in sending out the two spies. They went to Jericho and were led to Rahab's house. She was a woman of ill-repute, but that is how God's grace works. She believed in God, and was transformed. The arrival of the spies was reported to the king of Jericho. He gave orders that they should be taken to him. Rahab was quick in thinking and she hid the spies on the roof of her house. She covered them with stalks of flax that she had kept there. She told those who had been sent from the king that indeed the men had come into her house, but they left at the time of the closing of the gate. These were her words: *“There came men unto me, but I wist not whence they were: And it came to pass about the time of shutting of the gate, when it was dark, that the men went out: whither the men went I wot not: pursue after them quickly; for ye shall overtake them”* (Josh 2:4-5). She misdirected the king's men to pursue after the spies. They believed her and the spies were not discovered. This was part of the strategy.

THOUGHT: God bestows grace to all His elect.

PRAYER: Father, teach me what to say at the right time.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 11

JOSHUA 2

HEBREWS 11:30-31

*“...Rahab perished not
with them that believed not...”*

RAHAB’S CONFESSION AND REQUEST (I)

Rahab told a lie (Josh 2:4), yet she was not reprimanded in Scripture. Lying is clearly forbidden in the Ten Commandments (Exod 20:16), but Rahab had no knowledge of the Law. What Scripture does affirm is her faith in the God of Israel. One milestone in the mission of the spies was overcome.

The communication in those days was still primitive, nevertheless the spies utilised what was at their disposal. Without formal training on espionage, they did their work following a briefing from Joshua. However, in their mission, they demonstrated a high standard of performance on the job. Their mission was part of God’s plan to give the land of Canaan to Israel.

Rahab conversed with the two spies and revealed the fear of Israel in Jericho and all of Canaan. It is not known what made the spies go into her house. The matter of great importance is their discovery of her faith in the God of Israel. This faith is commended in the alternative reading in Hebrews. Note these comments about her: *“By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace”* (Heb 11:31). As she conversed with the spies, they learned of her faith in God. This is her declaration: *“I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath”* (Josh 2:9-11). This confession was encouraging to the spies. The victory of Israel was unfolding. The kings of the Amorites whom Israel had defeated were their neighbours beyond Jordan.

THOUGHT: God gives a link in His mission when it is needed.

PRAYER: Father, may Thy help come to me when it is needed.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 12

JOSHUA 2

JAMES 2:24-26

*“...was not Rahab the harlot
justified by works...?”*

RAHAB'S CONFESSION AND REQUEST (II)

The inhabitants of Jericho knew that the kings east of River Jordan were powerful, but they were no match for Israel who were then under Moses. The spies were thus informed and they knew the mind of the enemy.

Rahab did not only show her faith in God, she also made a personal request to the spies. She told them to return her kindness and cooperation by saving her family when God gave them the city of Jericho. She was sure that God had delivered the city to Israel. She needed assurance of safety. The men agreed to her plea and offered a token of that pledge.

The Scarlet Thread of Salvation: When the danger was gone, Rahab brought the men down from the rooftop. They were ready to depart, but they first promised to protect Rahab and her family when God would give them the city. The men made an agreement and swore an oath. Then Rahab let them down a window on the wall of the city with a rope. She told the men to hide in the mountain for three days until their pursuers returned and the way for them was safe. They gave her a token of a scarlet thread and instructed her to tie it on the window of her house. They told her also to ask all her family—father, mother, brothers and sisters—to take refuge in the house when the city was being taken. They would be spared from death. That thread was not only a sign, it also had the significance of pointing to the salvation by the blood of Christ. That was the purpose of the colour red. In the Exodus, all the households of Israel in Egypt were told to kill a lamb and put the blood on the door posts and lintel of their houses. When the angel of death saw the blood, he would pass by that house. Today, as we read this, Christ has already come and has shed His blood and all who believe in Him have salvation and everlasting life.

THOUGHT: *“...without shedding of blood is no remission.”* (Heb 9:22)

PRAYER: I thank Thee, Father, for the power of the blood of Christ.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 13

JOSHUA 2:1-24

MATTHEW 1:1-5

*“And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab;
and Booz begat Obed of Ruth;
and Obed begat Jesse.”*

THE MISSION FULFILLED

The safe return of the spies was all important in that mission. They hid in the mountain three days and were not discovered. They then returned to Joshua and reported the success of their mission. They told of the faint hearts of the inhabitants of Jericho and all of Canaan. They affirmed that, truly, God had given them the land and delivered the inhabitants into their hands. They were also in agreement about the safety of Rahab. She later married Salmon, believed to be one of the spies. Her name is in the lineage of Jesus Christ.

The time had come and the first step to enter Canaan had been taken. Jericho was the first city set for capture. It was God who made this possible as He had promised from the time of the calling of Moses. He had put fear in the hearts of the inhabitants so that there was no more strength in them to fight back. Faith in God and the mediation of Christ is the hope of salvation for everyone who believes in Him. Here is a comment by Matthew Henry that sums up the episode,

“It was by faith that Rahab received those with peace, against whom her king and country had war. We are sure this was a good work; it is so spoken of by the apostle, Jam 2:25; and she did it by faith, such a faith as set her above the fear of man. Those only are true believers, who find in their hearts to venture for God; they take his people for their people, and cast in their lot among them. The spies were led by the special providence of God, and Rahab entertained them out of regard to Israel and Israel’s God, and not for lucre or for any evil purpose. Though excuses may be offered for the guilt of Rahab’s falsehood, it seems best to admit nothing which tends to explain it away. Her views of the Divine law must have been very dim: a falsehood like this, told by those who enjoy the light of revelation, whatever the motive, would deserve heavy censure.”

THOUGHT: “Faith is the victory that overcomes the world.”

PRAYER: Father, may I ever be assured of Thy saving grace.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 14

JOSHUA 3

PSALM 44:1-4

“...O God:
command deliverances for Jacob.”

THE FINAL PREPARATIONS TO CROSS RIVER JORDAN

The crossing of River Jordan was a miraculous event in the whole exodus. It was the final move to inherit Canaan. It stands out in the history of Israel as God fulfilled His promise. When the appointed day came, they made the final preparations and crossed over into Canaan. Joshua charged the people on what to do and gave them assurance that God would fulfil all His promises. The occupation of Canaan was not easy; they were actually marching to war. Israel was ready.

Israel, removed from their last abode in Shittim, was on the edge of River Jordan. Joshua had appointed officers who commanded the people. After three days, the officers went through the host to give the final marching orders to the people. This was a massive undertaking because of the size of the population. It is estimated that Israel's population then was about two million, which was the figure derived after a census was taken in Moab (Num 26). If all the tribes had an equal number of people, the nine-and-a-half tribes crossing the river would be about one hundred and fifty thousand people per tribe. The numbers are not accurate but it gives an idea of the size of the population that Joshua had to deal with. The actual crossing alone might have taken a whole day or two. The officers were on standby to communicate to the people any message that Joshua might give.

In the first order, the people were to go after the priests and the Levites who bore the Ark of the Covenant. They were instructed to keep a distance of about one hundred metres from the Ark. Joshua had given the details of the marching orders and all was set for the long-expected event.

Every undertaking needs preparation and obedience. Israel was ready as they trusted the hand of God. They had known all His wonders those forty years.

THOUGHT: The LORD God is the God who keeps His promises.

PRAYER: Father, may Thy promises come true to me each day.

LORD'S DAY, OCTOBER 15

JOSHUA 3

PSALM 46:7-11

*“Be still, and know that I am God:
I will be exalted among the heathen...”*

JOSHUA'S CHARGE TO THE PEOPLE

The crossing of River Jordan was Joshua's first major duty he had to undertake since taking over the leadership from Moses. He told the people to sanctify themselves. God is holy and all who draw near to Him are likewise to be holy. This is a scriptural requirement and Joshua had to remind the people that they were standing before a holy God. He had great expectation and did not wish to allow anything to stand in between them and God.

The Ark of the Covenant was a central representation of the presence of God among them. The priests who bore the Ark were to come to the brink of River Jordan and stand still in the water. Joshua gave these instructions step by step and waited on God to show them what would follow. He had to do this because they were venturing into the unknown. Today, Christians are engaged in a spiritual warfare and it is not an easy undertaking. It is not of flesh and blood but of spiritual wickedness in high places (Eph 6:10ff).

God's Words to Joshua: It was at this point that God spoke to Joshua. He said, *“This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee. And thou shalt command the priests that bear the ark of the covenant, saying, When ye are come to the brink of the water of Jordan, ye shall stand still in Jordan”* (Josh 3:7-8). The people knew that God had truly chosen Joshua. God told him to command the priests where they would stand. This narrative parallels that of the crossing of the Red Sea. The waters stopped in both cases and Israel walked on dry land. They saw the salvation of God. The priests did as they were commanded and waited on God to bring to pass what He had promised. That communication from heaven encouraged Joshua greatly. Thus he spoke to the people with all confidence.

THOUGHT: God uses miracles in His perfect timing according to His purpose.

PRAYER: Father, may Thy testimonies give me confidence to trust in Thee always.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 16

JOSHUA 3

PSALM 31:1-8

*“For thou art my rock and my fortress;
therefore for thy name’s sake lead me...”*

JOSHUA’S ASSURANCE TO THE PEOPLE

Joshua called the people to come and hear the words of God. God gave him a voice and a favourable environment so that he was able to put across his message clearly by word of mouth. Joshua told Israel that they would know God was with them and He would drive away the Canaanites before them.

At this point, the fear of Israel among the Canaanites had driven them behind the walls of their cities. Rahab’s testimony revealed the presence of that fear among the inhabitants of Canaan. The demonstration of God’s power had changed the perception of all the nations that had encountered Israel at that time of history. How God would drive out the Canaanites, as He said, was yet to be revealed. Nevertheless, as the Ark passed by, each tribe of Israel was to choose one man to go with the priests. God told them that when the feet of the priests who bore the Ark touched the waters, the river water would stop.

Israel Crossed Jordan: The waters of Jordan stood still, though the waters of Jordan were overflowing. The people began to cross the river on dry ground. The point of crossing was against the city of Jericho. All Israel passed as the priests stood in the river. All the people passed over River Jordan.

The long-awaited promise to occupy Canaan had come. This account reveals who God is and that all things are possible with Him. These stories of the wonders of God have been told and retold, but the unbelieving hearts will always have a reason to reject. It is one of the wiles of the devil to harden the hearts of the people that they do not believe. However, the Word of God always stands. Let us believe all His promises.

THOUGHT: What creatures cannot do, the Creator brings it to pass.

PRAYER: Father, may this day be a great day for me as I wait on Thee.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 17

JOSHUA 4:1-10

PSALM 89:11-15

*“Thou hast a mighty arm:
strong is thy hand,
and high is thy right hand.”*

THE SIGN OF THE TWELVE STONES

The crossing of River Jordan was a landmark occasion for Israel as has been observed. God then commanded Joshua to choose twelve men, one from each tribe, to take stones from the crossing point. The command to appoint twelve men, one from every tribe, showed representation and unity of the nation and consolidated their commitment to what God had commanded. The stones were to be for a sign and a memorial, not just for them but for generations to come, to remember what God had done for them. They were told to take those stones to their first stop in the land of Canaan. Joshua did as God commanded. He chose the twelve men and told them what they had to do. They picked the stones from the place where the feet of the priests stood in the dry river bed of River Jordan. Subsequently, these were set in Gilgal where they lodged that first night. Joshua was magnified before all Israel as Moses was. They crossed the River Jordan and were ready to settle in Canaan.

Though the tribes of Reuben, Gad and half-tribe of Manasseh had been given their inheritance east of Jordan, they were still represented as they were one nation. They also took part in the war to capture the land of Canaan.

While Joshua prepared to erect the monument of twelve stones, he repeated the words of God to the people. It must have taken nearly a whole day for the whole multitude to cross that point considering the great number of people that had to go over the river. At last, they were in Canaan.

THOUGHT: “Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father!”

PRAYER: Thy works, Father, are assuring. May I bear witness of them continually.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 18

JOSHUA 4:11-18

PSALM 31:1-8

*“For thou art my rock and my fortress;
therefore for thy name’s sake lead me...”*

THE MIRACLE OF CROSSING RIVER JORDAN

The marching of Israel was orderly; we are told from the text that the number of the army of the tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh was forty thousand. The rest of the tribes would be larger as they included their wives, children and livestock. That was indeed a great multitude. The movement was, however, orderly. Each tribe had their own side and every person was accounted for since they had leaders of thousands down to ten. Every one of them had to be at their place and the leader of every group reported to his superior.

The book of Numbers tells of the efficiency of that system. It worked well in the time of Moses, and Joshua inherited and made full use of it. The primary concern at this point was how the directive of God was to be fulfilled. The tribes of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh kept the promise that they had made to Moses and were at the forefront in crossing River Jordan, ready to fight. Here was an expression of unity in the conquest of Canaan. Israel was now on the plains of Jericho and was waiting for Joshua’s orders. Everything was going according to schedule and there was a marked cooperation of all the twelve tribes and their leader to bring to pass God’s promise to them. They had learned well their lesson and were ready to do as God commanded.

Matthew Henry made this observation about the setting up of the stones: “The works of the Lord are so worthy of remembrance, and the heart of man is so prone to forget them, that various methods are needful to refresh our memories, for the glory of God, our advantage, and that of our children. God gave orders for preparing this memorial.”

Though God had done great miracles among the children of Israel, the crossing of River Jordan authenticated the appointment and capability of Joshua to lead. After they were all clear past River Jordan, the river returned to its normal course and overflowed its banks. The text says that Israel feared Joshua as they feared Moses. It was the first major miracle after he took over the leadership from Moses.

THOUGHT: God raises and uses leaders who are worthy.

PRAYER: Father, give us leaders who are worthy and faithful.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 19

JOSHUA 4:11-18

PROVERBS 16:1-9

*“When a man’s ways please the LORD,
he maketh even his enemies
to be at peace with him.”*

THE LORD MAGNIFIED JOSHUA

The task before Joshua was not an easy one; there were potential internal and external obstacles to surmount and he was prepared for it. Israel accepted and revered him because they were certain that God had appointed him. The communication from Joshua was taken as from God.

Ahead of Israel was the task of conquering and occupying the land of Canaan. Earlier, the spies had testified that the cities of Canaan had very high walls and were not easy to overcome. Furthermore, the inhabitants were of huge stature and, without God, Israel was disadvantaged. Joshua was one of the spies and only he and Caleb had encouraged the people to go and occupy the land. Then, the voice of the majority of the spies had prevailed and God told Moses to delay the occupation.

The time came for Joshua to fulfil what he believed was possible all along. The children of Israel could not trust themselves and they had to wait for direction from God. That miracle of drying the riverbed for Israel to cross the river spoke to them: they were to listen to Joshua. He was also encouraged by the testimony of the latest spy report. The two men who had gone to Jericho on that mission brought tidings of great fear among the Canaanites. If he was to rely on external appearance, he would not even attempt to conquer the land.

Joshua had good credentials in leadership and he trusted God. Not once had he raise any question about what God had commanded or promised. He knew that this was the time to test his leadership qualities and he did not want to discourage Israel. He knew also that his testimony would teach the future generations. He did what God told him when they set their feet on Canaan. He went forward with great optimism.

Israel at this point was united; the spirit of rebellion that characterised the forty years of the Exodus was no more a problem. They were reformed. They obeyed Joshua and were ready to start a new era in Canaan.

THOUGHT: Faithfulness wins the favour of both man and God.

PRAYER: Father, grant us harmony as we serve Thee today.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 20

JOSHUA 4:19-24

JOHN 8:31-36

*“And ye shall know the truth,
and the truth shall make you free.”*

THE MEANING OF THE MEMORIAL SET UP IN GILGAL

Gilgal was the first stop of Israel in Canaan. It was a city between River Jordan and Jericho. It was the tenth day of the first month that Israel encamped in Gilgal. “The name means rolling a wheel in a circle. The special association which Israel had with the name was the rolling away of their reproach by their circumcision after long neglect of the ordinance in the wilderness” (Davis Dictionary of the Bible).

Joshua pitched the twelve stones there. He did this by the express command of God. This was meant to be a testimony to future generations that God dried the waters of River Jordan and also the Red Sea earlier when they came out of the Land of Egypt. These were the words of Joshua, *“When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean these stones? Then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land. For the LORD your God dried up the waters of Jordan from before you, until ye were passed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red sea, which he dried up from before us, until we were gone over”* (Josh 4:21-23).

This was a testimony to pass on to the generations to come. They would then learn more about God, His attributes and how He related to them. A visible memorial would be an object lesson to the future generations. There were many wonders in the Exodus that were not repeated, but the memorial would testify of those wonders.

God has a cloud of witnesses, as the book of Hebrews calls such testimonies. The promises of Scripture are true and the salvation that has been offered to us freely will truly lead us home. Jesus makes a call to all who are needy to go to Him and find rest for their souls (Matt 11:28-30). He promised to go and prepare a place for His own and to come to take them home (John 14:1-3). Come to Jesus today, and live. His offer gives you a sure hope of eternal life.

THOUGHT: A memorial is a landmark that testifies for the truth. This truth is found in the perfect Scriptures today.

PRAYER: Father, may I be part of the witnesses for the truth.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 21

JOSHUA 5

PSALM 26:1-8

*“...I have trusted also in the LORD;
therefore I shall not slide.”*

THE ARRIVAL IN CANAAN AND CIRCUMCISION

Israel had now arrived in Canaan and all the Canaanite inhabitants heard of it and were afraid. As the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, the kings of Canaan heard that God had dried the waters of River Jordan. Joshua 5:1 says that the heart of those kings melted and there was no more spirit in them. They could only arm themselves and use the best strategy they knew to defend themselves. Their walled cities and strong army were their hope, not knowing that these also could not stop the God of Israel.

The Canaanites had known of the coming of Israel and fear had gripped them, but they did not know what to do. It was a time for them to know the power of God. He had demonstrated His power and none could resist. Israel, on the other hand, had the Law of God and was expected to fulfil its precepts. They only had to obey God and do His bidding. God made them a rod of chastisement to the Canaanites because of their abominable lifestyle and their rejection of God. The days ahead would not be easy.

In Gilgal, Joshua circumcised all the males who were born in the wilderness but had not been circumcised since they came out of Egypt. He understood the spiritual significance of circumcision. They had not been able to do so in the wilderness for forty years. The covenant of circumcision was an outward sign which involved the shedding of blood. It was also a spiritual exercise.

Circumcision was commanded by God since the days of Abraham. When Jacob went to Egypt, his family was already part of that covenant. Circumcision was a sign and a seal of the covenant relationship with God. It is similar to baptism in the Christian church today. Baptism is an acknowledgement of regeneration that has taken place in the heart, and also an admission to the family of God.

THOUGHT: The time will surely come when God's purposes will be accomplished.

PRAYER: Father, may I always discern Thy will and obey Thy commands.

LORD'S DAY, OCTOBER 22

JOSHUA 5

ACTS 2:22-24

*“Him, being delivered
by the determinate counsel
and foreknowledge of God...”*

ISRAEL KEPT THE FIRST PASSOVER IN CANAAN

After the circumcision, the children of Israel kept the Passover. *“And they did eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow after the passover...And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land...”* (Josh 5:11-12). New life had started for them, and Joshua had a great task ahead of him.

The Passover was the second most important sacrament after circumcision. It was a feast ordained of God when they came out of Egypt. It was commemorative of the tenth plague in Exodus 12. It was necessary that the blood should be applied to the upper door posts and side posts of the houses of the children of Israel. It was then commanded that it should be repeated annually. It was also observed at Sinai while they were on their journey as recorded in Numbers 9:1-14. The current observation was their third.

This feast was typical of the death of Christ and is represented in the New Testament Church by the Lord's Supper. The Lord is referred to as the Lamb without blemish (1 Pet 1:19). When the time came, He was offered by God's appointment (Acts 2:23). Paul specifically said that *“Christ our passover is sacrificed for us”* (1 Cor 5:7).

Joshua knew the importance of the Passover. As God had commanded through Moses, Joshua commanded its observance. It was one of the top priorities when they arrived in Canaan. In that feast, every family had to kill a lamb or a kid of one year without blemish. The observance did not only fulfil what God had commanded, it was also a clear lesson for the children of Israel. In it, they looked forward to redemption that came through Christ. Then, the children of Israel were set to conquer Canaan. They waited for a directive from God.

Today, in the Christian church, we look back to the accomplished sacrifice of Christ and commemorate it in the Lord's Supper.

THOUGHT: The Passover reveals God's plan of redemption.

PRAYER: Father, I thank Thee for instituting the reminder of the sacrifice of Christ.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 23

JOSHUA 5

PSALM 124

*“Our help is in the name of the LORD,
who made heaven and earth.”*

THE MANNA CEASED AND ISRAEL ATE CORN

God had fulfilled His promise of bringing Israel to Canaan. The land was described to them earlier as a land flowing with milk and honey. These represented all the food available in that land, as well as the delicious nature of the food. Nothing appeals to the appetite more than the taste of these foods. The provision of manna ceased the day after Israel arrived in the Promised Land.

The children of Israel ate corn and the fruit of the land of Canaan that year. They had unleavened cakes and parched corn. It was a big transformation from what they were used to during those forty years. Manna is referred to in Psalm 78:25 as *“angels’ food.”* This is a figure of speech to express the excellent nature of manna. The children who were born in the wilderness, and grew up eating manna, did not know any other food. That supply lasted for forty years. Now that they were in Canaan, God stopped the supply of miracle food and they ate the fruit of the land.

In the New Testament, there are two instances when Jesus multiplied bread and fed thousands of people. In those two instances, it was only for one meal, yet they were great miracles. The number of meals and the people that ate manna in forty years can only be imagined. God’s resources are never limited, He is the Creator.

It was at this time that the Captain of the LORD’s host appeared to Joshua. He had a drawn sword in His hand. Joshua asked if He was for them or against them. He identified Himself to Joshua in a short conversation. Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and worshipped. He knew He was the pre-incarnate Christ (Josh 5:14-15). This revelation must have greatly encouraged Joshua to face the task ahead of him confidently. God spoke to Joshua as He had spoken to Moses.

Israel was set to wage war and to settle its tribes. The fear of the LORD was evident in them. God is faithful to His promises. Come to Him and He will save you too.

THOUGHT: A closer walk with God gives confidence.

PRAYER: Father, may I take every step with Thee.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 24

JOSHUA 6:1-4

PROVERBS 18:10-15

“The name of the LORD is a strong tower...”

THE CAMPAIGN TO OCCUPY CANAAN BEGAN

The war to capture Canaan for Israel started. Their arrival in Canaan was in effect a declaration of war. The Canaanites were following their movements and had gathered information about their achievements. They were also aware of what God had done for Israel since they left Egypt. In their immediate neighbourhood, across River Jordan, God had already given Israel the two kings of Moab and their land. They were also aware that God had told Israel that He would give them their land. There was a great fear in Canaan even though they were stronger than Israel in terms of their military capability. Some had chariots of iron in addition to strong, fortified cities. They also had larger numbers compared to Israel. If God had not promised to deliver these nations into the hand of Israel, it would have been futile fighting against them. Both sides were aware of this advantage on the part of Israel.

In the preparation to conquer the land as seen in Joshua 5, they worshipped God. They kept the two important ordinances: circumcision and the Passover. God also appeared to Joshua to assure him. At this point, they camped in Gilgal in the open field. They had no fortified cities to protect them. God was greatly magnified in what He was able to do for Israel. He put great fear in the hearts of the Canaanites so that they could not resist Israel.

Joshua waited for direction from God. God was also a capable strategist in military command. He targeted the strongholds of their enemies, i.e. their fortified cities. The spies whom Moses had sent earlier in the wilderness had reported some vital information. The Canaanites were men of huge physical stature and thus superior to Israel. God, however, promised to deliver Israel regardless of the Canaanites' physical might. Joshua approached the war with that promise. Israel was assured of victory because God was on their side.

THOUGHT: *“For by wise counsel thou shalt make thy war...”* (Prov 24:6)

PRAYER: Father, may I approach my tasks trusting in Thee.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 25

JOSHUA 6:6-27

EPHESIANS 6:10-18

“Put on the whole armour of God...”

DIRECTIONS TO CAPTURE JERICHO

God gave Joshua directions that led to the miraculous fall of the walls of Jericho. Joshua commanded the priests and men of war on what God required them to do. As they obeyed, God gave them the city by destroying the walls. Israel entered the city and slew all the living in the city. Only Rahab and her family were spared.

This is the sequence of events: Jericho was shut because of the fear of Israel. The protective fortification of high walls was their security in those ancient times. The walls were high and the gates were shut. Joshua and the children of Israel did not have any ability to break those walls and to wage a war to capture the city. God was their ability. God told Joshua that He had given him the city, its king and its army. All that Joshua needed to do was to follow His instructions. They were to compass the city to do once a day. Carrying the Ark of the Covenant, seven priests blew the trumpets and men of war accompanied them. They were to do this for six days and return to the camp each day. On the seventh day, they were to compass the city seven times. This was to be the D-Day. The priests, on the seventh round, were to blow the trumpets and all the people were to shout, and then the walls would fall down flat. The men of war were to go into the city, capture it and destroy all the living.

God gave these clear instructions and everyone waited for the time to come. Joshua told the people to do as God commanded. According to human reasoning, this was not the conventional way to prepare for war. However, this was a divine command and God knew how He would deliver the city of Jericho into the hands of Israel. Joshua, as the leader, had learned from Moses in the wilderness experience that the Word of God is final. He is Lord of heaven and earth, and He would bring to fulfilment His purposes in a way that man can never imagine. Joshua was ready to follow.

THOUGHT: A war ordered by God has a sure victory.

PRAYER: Father, please stand with me in all the spiritual battles in my life.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 26

JOSHUA 6:6-27

PSALM 26:1-8

*“...I have trusted also in the LORD;
therefore I shall not slide.”*

JOSHUA COMMANDED THE PRIESTS AND MEN OF WAR

Joshua commanded the priests to take up the Ark of the Covenant and seven priests to bear the trumpets of rams' horns. The people were to pass on and compass the city. All armed men were to pass before the Ark of the Covenant. They were to do this for six days and return to the camp.

Meanwhile, the city of Jericho was shut so that none went in or came out. As that march continued for six days, one can only imagine what went on inside the city. They would have expected disaster any day. Rahab must have gathered her family in her house and made prominent the scarlet thread that the spies had given her as a token of their vow. The rest of the people must have been resigned to whatever would befall them. Those who thought they could put up a resistance might have been watching on top of the wall or in the watch-towers. They might still have put their hope in their strong walls and ability to fight back. Nevertheless, it is certain that the whole population were demoralised and were expecting the worst to happen.

Israel continued the daily routine and the people of Jericho endured that mental torture. There was no mention of what their king did at that time. The mental torture continued all that time inside the walls of Jericho. Israel also did not know how the events would turn out, but they trusted God to fulfil what He had promised: to deliver Jericho into their hands.

The first claim of the land of Canaan was at hand. On the seventh day, the priests and men of war compassed the city seven times, blowing the trumpets as they went. On the seventh time, they were to shout as the priests blew the trumpets. At that shout, the walls of Jericho would fall. Joshua 6:20 describes the outcome: *“So the people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets: and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat...”* God fulfilled His promise as He rendered the fortification of Jericho to nothing.

THOUGHT: “Faith is the victory that overcomes the world.”

PRAYER: Father, Thou art the Victor in all battles!

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 27

JOSHUA 6:16-27

PSALM 67

*“God shall bless us;
and all the ends of the earth shall fear him.”*

JOSHUA GAVE THE FINAL INSTRUCTIONS

Joshua gave the instructions to spare the life of Rahab and her family. She had hidden the spies and they had sworn to her that they would not hurt her and her family, and that she and her family would be protected from death.

He also gave instructions against touching the unclean thing. In that regard, they were to kill every living thing in the city. Only vessels of silver, gold, brass and iron were to be reserved and consecrated for God. God knew the spirit of covetousness in the hearts of men. He thus warned them against taking anything. They were to concentrate on the task ahead of them and destroy all that were living in Jericho.

Israel followed all these instructions upon the fall of the walls of Jericho. The fall of this first city was the second major miracle that God performed under the leadership of Joshua, after the drying of River Jordan as witnessed earlier. It was another magnification of Joshua in his leadership.

The fall and delivery of Jericho to Israel was complete. All living in the city of Jericho were destroyed. Rahab and her family, father, mother, brothers and sisters, were delivered. (As mentioned, Rahab eventually married and she was mentioned in the lineage of Jesus Christ.) In the mop-up, the city was burned, and her ruins were in ashes. Joshua then made a pronouncement on Jericho and warned against rebuilding it. The fame of Joshua spread throughout all Canaan and the Canaanites greatly feared Israel.

When God is in the battle, there is a sure victory. He showed His power and gave Jericho to Israel. The capture of Jericho was the commencement of the giving of the Promised Land to God's people. He is God and He knows the end from the beginning. He is also sovereign. He has not left us without a witness. Believe in Jesus now and have victory.

THOUGHT: God's battles do not depend on man's weapons.

PRAYER: Father, may many be saved and receive eternal life.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 28

JOSHUA 7

GALATIANS 1:6-9

*“I marvel that ye are so soon
removed from him that called you...”*

SIN IN THE CAMP OF ISRAEL

There was a setback for Israel after that great victory at Jericho, where God had taken the lead in conquering it. There was sin in the camp! This came to the fore at the invasion of Ai where they were defeated. It was devastating and they could not understand the turn of events.

As Joshua and the elders of Israel pleaded with God, He told them that there was sin in Israel, and they must fix it immediately. Joshua investigated and the offender was taken. The offender confessed to his sin. He was punished by death and the nation hoped for healing.

Sin in the camp of Israel came with consequences. The nation committed a trespass in taking the accursed thing. Orders had been given prior to the invasion of Jericho that Israel was to kill all that were living in Jericho and take nothing for themselves. Only gold, silver, brass and iron were to be taken for consecration to God. However, Achan could not restrain his covetous heart. He took an expensive Babylonian garment, which in the eyes of God was an accursed thing. This transgression caused the anger of God against Israel.

This meant that the nation was doomed and destined for punishment. Every child is fearful and anticipates severe punishment from an angry father when the child commits a trespass. God knew about that sin and He chose to reveal it in a way that would teach the nation an important lesson.

The sin of Achan came at a time of great need when Israel needed to conquer Canaan. Joshua was going about his duties as the leader of Israel. The nation was also marching confidently after the victory at Jericho. They were set for the next move in the occupation of Canaan and they waited for word from Joshua. However, every sin has consequences and cannot be hidden. God had to unmask it.

THOUGHT: Sin is like a seed hidden in wet soil. It will show up.

PRAYER: Father, set me free from every stain of sin.

LORD'S DAY, OCTOBER 29

JOSHUA 7:1-12

JAMES 4:17

*“Therefore to him that knoweth
to do good, and doeth it not,
to him it is sin.”*

SIN CAME WITH A SETBACK

In preparation to invade the city of Ai, Joshua sent spies from Jericho to go and view Ai. The men went and did as they were commanded. Then they returned to Joshua and gave their recommendation concerning the invasion of Ai.

The spies told Joshua that there was no need to send all their people to the city for it was few in number and would be an easy target. They recommended sending two or three thousand men. Joshua sent three thousand men, confident that they were going to smite the city easily. They were sure that victory was in their hands.

However, Israel was in for a surprise! The men of Ai chased them and they fled before them. The men of Ai smote about thirty-six men of Israel. They also chased them from before the gate up to Shebarim. The hearts of the children of Israel melted and they saw themselves as captives in the land of Canaan. They could not see any hope of living after that defeat. Joshua knew where to get the answer regarding this turn of events. God was their only hope.

Joshua and the Elders of Israel Made Supplications to the LORD: It was a very heart-breaking situation, but bringing that burden to God was the only solution for Joshua and Israel. This was their passionate plea: *“And Joshua said, Alas, O Lord GOD, wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? would to God we had been content, and dwelt on the other side Jordan! O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies!”* (Josh 7:7-8). They pleaded for the sanctity of God's name. God knew all that was happening and the experience was a process of spiritual growth for Joshua and the elders. After the devastating turn of events, their ears were more attentive to the voice of God. Joshua made his appeal with reason. They expected a positive answer.

THOUGHT: Appealing to God is the right thing to do in the midst of any disaster.

PRAYER: Father, please come to my rescue in my time of need.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 30

JOSHUA 7:13-18

PSALM 66:16-20

*“If I regard iniquity in my heart,
the Lord will not hear me.”*

THE LORD ANSWERED JOSHUA’S PLEA

God revealed to Israel that there was sin in the camp. He spoke and told Joshua to get up. He then revealed to him that Israel had sinned and transgressed His covenant which He had commanded them. They had disobeyed the commandment of God.

The nation was told of the specific sin: they had taken an accursed thing. God said that the accursed thing was in their midst. He then ordered that the people be sanctified. It was because of this transgression that the children of Israel could not have victory over their enemies. The only way out was for them to destroy that accursed thing in their midst.

At least up to this point, Israel had diagnosed what was ailing them and there was need then for a cure. God told them that they could not stand before their enemies as long as the accursed thing was in their midst. It was needful that they destroy it in order to live. This was the order that God gave to Joshua that would restore sanctity in Israel again: *“Up, sanctify the people, and say, Sanctify yourselves against to morrow: for thus saith the LORD God of Israel, There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel: thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you”* (Josh 7:13).

Joshua made an investigation and acted upon the discovery. In the morning, all the households of Israel were to be brought according to their tribe. Each tribe was taken for scrutiny and it did not take long before the suspect was discovered. The finger pointed at the tribe of Judah, but not everyone in the tribe had sinned. Joshua needed to know more before the culprit was caught. He continued his interrogation until it was narrowed down to Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah of the tribe of Judah. God made this revelation. Joshua took Achan aside and told him to confess what he had done.

THOUGHT: Every disorder needs to be addressed orderly.

PRAYER: Father, help me to have a disciplined approach in my service.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 31

JOSHUA 7:15-26

ISAIAH 63:10

*“...therefore he was turned
to be their enemy,
and he fought against them.”*

THE CONFESSION THAT ACHAN MADE

This was the confession that Achan made before Joshua: *“Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done: When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it”* (Josh 7:20-21). This was the truth of the matter and the offender was not free to go despite his confession. He had to pay for the consequences.

Joshua sent messengers to Achan's tent, and they found the accursed thing as Achan had confessed. They took it to Joshua and all Israel, and laid it before God. The punishment of Achan was a forgone conclusion. All his family and everything he owned were taken to the valley of Achor. Joshua passed a sentence on him and *“...all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones”* (Josh 7:25). The place was called the valley of Achor. This was a severe punishment, but it was needful to deter other potential offenders so that the nation could settle peacefully in Canaan.

This punishment was meted out on Achan particularly because the nation was in a state of war. In such a situation, a little error can cost many lives. When a nation is in such danger, there has to be cooperation from all concerned parties. Everyone must be obedient to the commandant of the forces. There is no room for carelessness. Though Joshua was the leader of Israel, it was God Himself who ordered the war. All the people of Israel had to be subject to Him. God requires whole-hearted obedience.

It is always true that the wages of sin is death. All Israel had to face punishment because of one person. Sin had to be dealt with and removed, and the sinner had to pay. Pray for God's grace that your sins may be forgiven.

THOUGHT: Sin is the first spiritual enemy. It must be removed.

PRAYER: I thank Thee, Father, for Jesus who takes away my sins.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 1

JOSHUA 8:1-9

PSALM 27:1-6

*“...the LORD is the strength of my life;
of whom shall I be afraid?”*

THE LORD ASSURED JOSHUA OF VICTORY AT AI

Earlier, when Israel wanted to capture the City of Ai, they were defeated because of the sin of Achan. When Joshua had the culprit punished, the nation was sanctified. They were then ready to make a second and victorious assault on Ai. Joshua devised and executed a strategy as God assured him of victory, and it worked. Israel waged the war and overcame Ai. They took the spoils and burned the city.

As Israel prepared to capture Ai, God spoke to Joshua to encourage him. God told him not to fear or be dismayed. God knew that he needed that assurance. Though Joshua was the commander of Israel, it was God who ordered the war. Joshua simply followed what God had told him. God instructed him to take all the men of war. Each one had to take part in the battle. God also told him that He had given him the king of Ai and its people. This was understood to mean that Israel would have victory over Ai. The fate of Ai would be like that of Jericho.

These are the opening words in the narrative: *“And the LORD said unto Joshua, Fear not, neither be thou dismayed: take all the people of war with thee, and arise, go up to Ai: see, I have given into thy hand the king of Ai, and his people, and his city, and his land”* (Josh 8:1). The capture of Ai was by simple conquest with military strategy and was not as complex as that of Jericho. Nevertheless, God’s hand was equally with Joshua as it was in the conquest of Jericho. The location of Ai is near Bethel and is some fifteen kilometres from Jerusalem. Researchers have made efforts to confirm the location of this city and almost all concur on the identification of that location. The city subsequently came under the tribe of Benjamin.

In Jericho, Israel was forbidden to take anything from the city and God commanded them to kill all the living. In Ai, Israel was allowed to take the cattle and other spoils for themselves.

THOUGHT: When God speaks, mortal beings are to obey.

PRAYER: Father, may I always listen carefully to Thy words.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 2

JOSHUA 8:10-29

PSALM 6

*“Let all mine enemies
be ashamed and sore vexed...”*

THE SECOND ATTEMPT TO CAPTURE AI

Joshua laid down a strategy to capture Ai to ensure success. This was the second attempt to capture it, and he was sure of victory. As the leader, he took command and made a careful plan.

He chose thirty thousand men and sent them behind the city. This was to be the ambush team. Joshua remained with the rest of the people and prepared to command the attack team. The team that Joshua led would go directly against the city. The intention of gaining victory was foremost in Joshua's plan. This was the approach that Israel had used in the first attempt, but they were defeated because God was not in that battle, and thirty-six of them were killed. This made Joshua go back to the drawing board, and it was revealed that sanctity was lacking in Israel.

When he had put all things right, God gave him the assurance and wisdom in this second approach. This time, he had the ambush team behind the city on the western side. When the assault team attacked, the men of Ai would respond by coming out and chasing them as they had done earlier. They would be more emboldened this time because they had defeated Israel and killed a number of them. However, in this second attempt, Joshua had the intention to draw the men of Ai out of the city. The army of Israel was commanded to flee when the men of Ai would chase them. The plan was that all would come out of the city and leave the gates open. Thus, the city would be without protection.

When they had all come out, the ambush team would then descend on the city and set it on fire. They would seize the city and take the spoils for themselves. God had commanded them and they followed His counsel (Josh 8:7-9). They were to follow the plan and capture the city.

The account affirms the doctrine of the sovereignty of God and human responsibility. Joshua was assured of victory, but he had to work hard.

THOUGHT: I am saved by grace, but I must live a holy life.

PRAYER: Father, help me to fulfil my spiritual duties.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 3

JOSHUA 8:10-29

PROVERBS 16:1-4

*“Commit thy works unto the LORD,
and thy thoughts shall be established.”*

SUCCESS IN SEIZING AI

In the history of wars, there are thrilling stories, but the story here tells us that the source of any victory is as stated in Proverbs 16:33: *“The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD.”* The strategy was all set and Joshua prepared to put it into action.

God told Joshua to stretch his spear towards Ai. This was symbolic of the power that God had given him to defeat the men of Ai. Joshua thus put the strategy into action. The men of Ai were caught unawares by the attack. However, they put up a resistance because they were encouraged by their earlier temporary victory. God had told Joshua that He had given him the king of Ai and his people. Israel marched with courage as Joshua had instructed them. When the ambush team had set the city on fire, the men of Ai looked back and saw their city going up in smoke. The ambush party also went after them from behind while the “fleeing” men of Israel turned against them.

The men of Ai were caught, as the saying goes, between a rock and a hard place. Thus, they were all slain. Joshua 8:25 gives the number of men who died: *“And so it was, that all that fell that day, both of men and women, were twelve thousand, even all the men of Ai.”* The king of Ai was captured alive and brought to Joshua. He was later hanged and buried in a heap of stones. Israel took the cattle and spoils of this city as God had permitted. The capture and destruction of Ai was the second success in Canaan that God gave Israel.

Israel succeeded in this battle against Ai because the children of Israel had been sanctified. The victory was as that of Jericho and the city was given to Israel. The city was not rebuilt immediately but the resources were used for the immediate needs of Israel. When God is in the battle, there is victory.

Have you put on the armour of God? Do you have victory over the devil?

THOUGHT: God’s plans are always perfect and easy to follow.

PRAYER: Father, may my trust in Thee ever remain.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 4

JOSHUA 8:30-35

JOHN 4:19-23

*“...true worshippers shall worship
the Father in spirit and in truth:
for the Father seeketh such to worship him.”*

ISRAEL WORSHIPPED IN THANKSGIVING

It was needful for Joshua and Israel to give thanks to God for the victory over Ai. This was progress in fulfilling God's promise to give them the land of Canaan. Ai was the second city and the hand of God was evident in their victory. Joshua then built an altar as was commanded in the Law of Moses, and offered sacrifices. He wrote a copy of the book of the Law upon the stones of the altar. Joshua also read the words of the Law and he did not leave out any word that Moses had written. All were in attendance and they heard the words.

The first thing that came to Joshua's mind after that victory was to communicate with God in true worship. He built an altar unto God in Mt Ebal. It was a mountain not far from Shechem that was separated from Mt Gerizim by a narrow valley. An altar was necessary for the worship then because Christ had not come and the highest form of worship was the offering of sacrifices. Joshua had to oversee that ceremony, and he followed the prescription of the Law of Moses in building that altar. It was made of whole stones that were not cut. No man lifted any iron upon the stones. On it, they offered sacrifices and peace offerings to God.

At that time, the children of Israel were still together in one place in their camps. Men of war were under the command of Joshua. Their foremost aim was to capture the whole land of Canaan and settle every tribe in the heritage that God had given. This worship was needed to give Israel a constant reminder that God was with them and would guide them in their mission. Joshua was the overall leader, and the priests and Levites were the spiritual leaders.

There were also other administrative officers whom Joshua used in conveying a message to the congregation, and they all cooperated in their tasks. They were all set to offer sacrifices to God. Israel was in a delicate position and they needed God to guide them.

THOUGHT: Duty to God comes first in any venture.

PRAYER: Father, let me worship Thee in spirit and in truth.

LORD'S DAY, NOVEMBER 5

JOSHUA 8:30-35

NEHEMIAH 8:1-8

*“So they read in the book
in the law of God distinctly,
and gave the sense...”*

JOSHUA AND ISRAEL RENEWED THE COVENANT

In facing such a task as Israel had, God must affirm every move, and the people had to be right with Him. Any sin is incompatible with God's presence among them. Sacrifices were thus needed as the external remedy for sins. It is God Himself who forgives but repentance and offering were needed on the part of man. Joshua was conversant with all these needs and he led Israel to fulfil their part. Everything had to be done right, in accordance with God's instruction.

The people concerned took part in this covenant. Joshua wrote upon a stone a copy of the Law of Moses. The treatment and use of the written Word of God demonstrated its importance from that early time. It will be remembered that in the early part of this book, God told Joshua that this book of the Law should not depart out of his mouth but he should meditate on it day and night (Josh 1:8). That was how he was going to be blessed and to greatly advance. When he copied the words onto the stones, he was aware of the value of those words and he wanted to magnify them before all Israel. Therefore, he wrote in their presence. It is not known how many of them were literate and able to read the words of the book. However, all of them could hear when the book was read. They understood that what God had said was final and was prescribed to them to learn by heart.

At that time all Israel (elders and officers and judges) stood on one side of the Ark of the Covenant. On the other side were priests and Levites who bore the Ark of the Covenant of God. The strangers who were born among them also took part. This followed the instruction given by Moses (Deut 31:12), and Joshua obeyed it in this first worship in the Land of Canaan. They stood in equal number upon Mt Ebal and Mt Gerizim (Deut 11:29; 27:11-26). They recited the blessings and the cursings that were written in the Law. Joshua was conversant with the Law, and he put them to the appointed use. The book of the Law was the voice of God.

THOUGHT: The Law of God is here to stay through all generations.

PRAYER: Father, may Thy Law ever be my guide to obey Thee.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 6

JOSHUA 8:30-35

PSALM 119:105-112

*“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
and a light unto my path.”*

THE BOOK OF THE LAW WAS WHOLLY READ

The Law is a covenant that God made with Israel. The exercise of its instructions was for Israel to repeat or to renew the covenant. This worship that Joshua convened was meant for this purpose also. This was everything to Israel. Joshua depended on God to guide him in this worship, and Israel was not to take it lightly. It was a time of meeting with God. Joshua stood as a representative and ensured that nobody was left out. Though they participated as a nation, each individual had to be personally responsible. It was a divine assembly and God was to be magnified above all people. Worship is the mother of virtues.

The reading of the book took centre stage. Joshua read the words of the Law, the blessings and cursings. Everything that was written in the Law was their standard. This was the beginning of the canon of written Scriptures. The Bible at that time was the first five books, commonly called the Pentateuch. Joshua read every word that Moses had commanded before Israel. Men, women, children and strangers were included in the audience. The book of the Law was a book for the spiritual life of the nation.

The people who heard the reading of the book were conversant with the Law. They were taught and they had learned their lesson. Today, the complete revelation of God is contained in the sixty-six books of the Bible (the Old and New Testaments). It is the inspired Word of God and has no mistake at all, and it is dependable. It is also needful to note that God has preserved all these words to this day. As believers, we have access to the contents of all the early Scriptures.

Worship and the written words of God cannot be separated. God is speaking to man in those words. Reading and understanding God's Word daily is part of the communion with the Creator. Do you worship and hear God's Word with understanding today?

THOUGHT: The Christian religion is contained in the written Scriptures, which are the true words of God.

PRAYER: Father, may I have hearing ears and a listening heart.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 7

JOSHUA 9

TITUS 3:1-5

“For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived...”

ISRAEL’S FAILURE WITH THE GIBEONITES

In the aftermath of Israel’s victory at Ai, the whole of Canaan was shaken. The kings of different cities came together and were set to fight with Israel. There was great fear among them because of Israel. One city that would have been the next target of Israel was Gibeon.

The king and the princes of Gibeon came up with a different response to the imminent attack. They decided on a diplomatic, yet deceptive, approach rather than war. They used deception and succeeded in getting the elders of Israel to make a league with them, to not harm them. They offered to serve Israel. It is evident that God had a purpose in this turn of events. It was also a warning to Joshua not to do anything without proper consultation with God. The events unfolded as follows.

The Canaanites had all heard of Israel’s victory at Ai, and the kings of Canaan were set to confront Joshua. They gathered themselves together to fight Joshua and Israel in one accord. They were resolved to organise a joint army against Israel. This was of course the natural thing for them to do since they had to fight for their survival. They knew all that God had done for Israel since Israel left Egypt. However, they thought that their combined forces would prevail. The initial victory in Ai encouraged them and they were ready to hold their ground to the end. However, the king of one of their cities had a different idea.

The Gibeonites had a different idea. They saw the peaceful approach as a better alternative. They knew what Joshua had done to the cities of Jericho and Ai. They chose the peaceful means but sent ambassadors to Israel wilily. In other words, they used deception to gain acceptance. They disguised themselves, pretending to be from a far country, and wanting to make a league with Israel. They came to Joshua in Gilgal and offered to serve Israel in return for peace. They convinced Joshua and the elders to make a league with them.

THOUGHT: An important decision cannot be made lightly.

PRAYER: Father, may I know Thy will when making all decisions.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 8

JOSHUA 9

PROVERBS 24:1-8

*“For by wise counsel thou shalt
make thy war: and in multitude of
counsellors there is safety.”*

THE ONLY ANSWER TO DECEPTION

God had not given Moses or Joshua direction on what to do in such a situation. It was expected of them to use their wisdom and the general guidelines in resolving the issues. For example, the daughters of Zelophehad had approached Moses regarding their inheritance. That was a new question and Moses had no reference point to help him decide. Thus, he asked God for an answer (Num 27:1-7). This was what Joshua should have done, for he was with Moses when the question of inheritance came up. However, he took the men of Gibeon as truthful. He did not investigate. The cunning approach of those men won.

The men of Gibeon came because of the Name of the God of Israel. They said that they knew what God had done in Egypt and in the land of Moab beyond Jordan. This was what Rahab had told the spies also. All the inhabitants of Canaan knew what God had done for Israel and were fearful. These ambassadors of Gibeon told all these things to Joshua. Their solemn request from their elders was to seek a league of peace with Israel. However, they concealed their real identity. They said they came from a far country, although Gibeon was in the neighbourhood of Gilgal where Israel had camped.

Joshua and the princes of Israel took them at their word, failing to ask counsel of God in their decision. The Gibeonites made themselves to look as if they had been travelling for several days to reach the camp of Israel. They said in Joshua 9:11-12, *“Wherefore our elders and all the inhabitants of our country spake to us, saying, Take victuals with you for the journey, and go to meet them, and say unto them, We are your servants: therefore now make ye a league with us. This our bread we took hot for our provision out of our houses on the day we came forth to go unto you; but now, behold, it is dry, and it is mouldy.”* They showed bottles of wine, garments and shoes to support their claim. They had taken time to devise how they would approach Israel.

THOUGHT: An irrational trust is dangerous.

PRAYER: Father, may I seek Thy will when judging matters.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 9

JOSHUA 9

MATTHEW 5:13-16

“Ye are the light of the world.

A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.”

GOD’S HAND SEEN IN THE ACT OF THE GIBEONITES

Matthew Henry saw the action of the Gibeonites from another point of view:

“Other people heard these tidings, and were irritated thereby to make war upon Israel; but the Gibeonites were induced to make peace with them. Thus the discovery of the glory and the grace of God in the gospel, is to some a savour of life unto life, but to others a savour of death unto death, 2 Co 2:16. The same sun softens wax and hardens clay. The falsehood of the Gibeonites cannot be justified. We must not do evil that good may come... one lie brings on another, and that a third, and so on. The way of that sin is especially down-hill. Yet their faith and prudence are to be commended. In submitting to Israel they submitted to the God of Israel, which implied forsaking their idolatries. And how can we do better than cast ourselves upon the mercy of a God of all goodness? The way to avoid judgment is to meet it by repentance. Let us do like these Gibeonites, seek peace with God in the rags of abasement, and godly sorrow; so our sin shall not be our ruin. Let us be servants to Jesus, our blessed Joshua, and we shall live.”

Joshua made a league with the Gibeonites and spared their lives. The princes of the congregation swore unto them. Israel recognised their true identity too late. But Israel had to keep their oath and let them live. Israel made them hewers of wood and drawers of water. They were to be lowly servants. They surrendered because they were fearful and accepted what was assigned to them.

There are two lessons here:

1. Do not make an important decision in haste.
2. Honour your oath.

THOUGHT: The sovereign hand of God is in every activity of men.

PRAYER: Father, may I bear a testimony for Thee by being truthful.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 10

JOSHUA 10:1-21

PHILIPPIANS 4:13-19

*"I can do all things through Christ
which strengtheneth me."*

GIBEON DEPENDED ON ISRAEL

The land of Canaan was divided into many small kingdoms. The small cities were ruled by kings. The victories of Israel over two cities were well known to the Canaanites. They knew what Israel had done to Jericho and Ai. Gibeon, one of their great cities, had made peace with Israel. The king of Jerusalem could not rest because of this development. He called on the other cities to unite and resist the advance of Israel.

On the other hand, Gibeon appealed to Joshua because it was in danger of an attack by the combined forces. Joshua responded and took over the battle. God told him not to fear for He was going to fight for them. As the children of God advanced, more time was needed to complete the slaughter of the Canaanites. At Joshua's word, God made the sun and the moon to stop in the sky for a whole day till the task was finished. Thus, they captured more land.

Their earlier victories and their peace treaty with Gibeon made the kings of Canaan to fear. They were uncertain of what would befall them next. They feared because Gibeon was a great city. The king of Jerusalem took the lead in asking the other kings of Canaan to unite and fight against Joshua. They knew that Gibeon had the capability to fight against Israel. Yet, Gibeon chose to make a league of peace.

The other Canaanite cities saw the Gibeonites as traitors and were resolved to fight them. Their first reaction was to attack Gibeon before fighting Israel. The new diplomatic relationship between Israel and Gibeon also dictated that they would be united in war. Nevertheless, Israel's faith in God helped Joshua and Israel to pursue their goal of conquering the land with great confidence.

THOUGHT: Those who trust God will attempt great things for Him.

PRAYER: Father, may my courage remain ever strong.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 11

JOSHUA 10:1-21

PSALM 131

*“Let Israel hope in the LORD
from henceforth and for ever.”*

THE HOSTILE KINGS FOUGHT JOSHUA

The Canaanite kings provoked Joshua as they united. The king of Jerusalem gathered the kings of five cities to smite Gibeon because it had made a peace treaty with Israel. They were generally fearful of the next step that Israel would take. They were aware that Joshua was set for war and was going to take their land.

It was natural for those kings to defend themselves. They regarded Gibeon as a traitor because they made a league with Israel. The kings must have taken time in the consulting rooms to reach a decision on what they would do to overcome Israel. Joshua 10:3-5 narrates the move of the king of Jerusalem: *“Wherefore Adonizedek king of Jerusalem sent unto Hoham king of Hebron, and unto Piram king of Jarmuth, and unto Japhia king of Lachish, and unto Debir king of Eglon, saying, Come up unto me, and help me, that we may smite Gibeon: for it hath made peace with Joshua and with the children of Israel. Therefore the five kings of the Amorites, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, the king of Eglon, gathered themselves together, and went up, they and all their hosts, and encamped before Gibeon, and made war against it.”* It was a very strong army and they felt they were able to overcome Gibeon and Israel. They targeted Gibeon because of that peace treaty with Israel. Since Gibeon was a party with Israel by virtue of that league, it was considered an enemy and those kings would attack it first. Those cities were neighbours and it was easy for them to come together in war. Humanly speaking, their combined armies were strong enough, but the hand of the God of Israel made the difference. It determined who would have the victory.

THOUGHT: Am I on God’s side in my spiritual walk?

PRAYER: Father, may I always take Thy side in all my decisions.

LORD'S DAY, NOVEMBER 12

JOSHUA 10:1-21

MATTHEW 5:13-16

"Ye are the light of the world.

A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid."

JOSHUA ENTERED THE WAR WITH THE FIVE KINGS

The men of Gibeon informed Joshua of the imminent attack on their city by the five kings and asked for help. Israel was obliged to assist Gibeon because of their league. In effect, Israel entered the war. On one hand, they were defending the Gibeonites and, on the other, they were fighting to possess the land that God had promised them.

God told Joshua that He would deliver those kings into his hand. This was an encouragement that helped him fight with confidence. God discomfited the enemies before Israel. They were slain with a great slaughter in Gibeon and were chased all the way to Bethhoron and to Azekah and Mekkedah. God then sent a great hailstorm. The huge hailstones were capable of killing the people. There were more who died from the hailstones than those whom Israel slew with the sword.

The miracles of God continued to be manifested: *"Then spake Joshua to the LORD in the day when the LORD delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. Is not this written in the book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day"* (Josh 10:12-13). Besides the literal assistance that God rendered to Israel, these miracles gave greater confidence to Joshua. He fought and chased away the Canaanites. God was fulfilling what He had promised them. When they withdrew to their camp, they were sure of having their own land at last.

Joshua looked to God for guidance in the next phase of the conquest.

THOUGHT: The sovereign hand of God is in every activity of man.

PRAYER: Father, may I bear an honest testimony for Thee.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 13

JOSHUA 10:22-43

PSALM 64

*“And all men shall fear,
and shall declare the work of God...”*

THE FIVE KINGS HELD CAPTIVE IN MAKKEDAH

The armies of the enemies were entirely destroyed. The kings were, however, protected and all the five managed to escape to a cave in Makkedah. They became captives because they were stripped of their armies. Joshua ordered great stones to be rolled upon the mouth of the cave. They were locked up in the cave. He also ordered round-the-clock vigil.

Joshua ordered a mop-up to ensure that none of the armies of those kings escaped. They were not allowed to enter their cities, and were all slain. The next day, the five kings were removed from the cave and the men of Israel were ordered to put their feet on their necks. This humiliation was meant to declare victory over them. Joshua then spoke to encourage his men: *“Fear not, nor be dismayed, be strong and of good courage: for thus shall the LORD do to all your enemies against whom ye fight”* (Josh 10:25). The kings were slain and hanged on five trees. Hanging, according to the law, is symbolic of a curse. They were afterwards buried in the cave. This victory gave Joshua a greater stride in his occupation of Canaan.

The defeat of the five kings and the capture of their cities were a major victory up to this point for Joshua. He completely destroyed those cities and slew all their inhabitants. He did this with little effort. In addition to the cities of those kings, he also smote Kadeshbarnea, Gaza and Goshen (Josh 10:41). The Canaanites were greatly frightened because of Israel and had to flee before them. They were afraid to resist Israel's advance. This hastened Israel's occupation of this land, and that would allow Joshua to divide the land among the tribes of Israel. God fought for Israel and they returned to their camp at Gilgal. The conquest of Canaan picked up pace with the capture of those five cities.

THOUGHT: God was the source of Israel's conquests and victories.

PRAYER: Father, may I trust Thee in every spiritual venture.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 14

JOSHUA 11

PHILIPPIANS 4:4-7

*“Be careful for nothing;
but in every thing by
prayer and supplication...”*

THE KINGS OF THE NORTH CAME UP AGAINST ISRAEL

The conquest of the northern cities took a shorter time and a larger territory was claimed. This was because Israel had gained greater confidence in facing any army. God did not cease to encourage Joshua with assurance of victory because He was fighting for them. The kings of the northern part were stronger and better equipped, but Joshua conquered and took all their land. The following is a summary of the northern conquest.

Jabin, king of Hazor, heard of Joshua's victories in the south. They were not ready to surrender and were persuaded that they were strong enough to fight against Israel. Jabin sent for the kings of the other cities to come together to fight against Israel. In any war, there would be aggression and defence. In this narrative, Israel was put on the defence. The kings were from a larger territory as observed in Joshua 11:3: *“And to the Canaanite on the east and on the west, and to the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Jebusite in the mountains, and to the Hivite under Hermon in the land of Mizpeh.”* Jabin invited these other kings and initiated an assault against Israel. They were overwhelmed by fear because of the successes that Joshua had achieved against the other Canaanite kings, and the Amorites beyond Jordan. Their strategy was to attack by surprise, and they depended on their military might.

Joshua knew all along that the word of God would be fulfilled. Remember that he was one of the twelve spies whom Moses had sent earlier to spy on the land of Canaan (Num 13:8). He was one of the only two who had encouraged the people to go and occupy the land, but the majority won the hearts of the people. God then pronounced their punishment and they were made to wander in the wilderness for forty years. Nevertheless, God did not change His original promise to give them the land. Joshua succeeded Moses and was tasked with waging war to chase away and destroy the Canaanites, and to divide the land among the twelve tribes of Israel.

THOUGHT: God is always true to His word. He never fails.

PRAYER: Father, give me consistent faith (like Joshua's) in Thy Word.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 15

JOSHUA 11

COLOSSIANS 1:19-23

“If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel...”

JOSHUA PUT UP A DEFENCE

The battlefield where Jabin gathered his great army to fight Israel was by the waters of Merom. This is a place north of the Sea of Galilee. It is near the source of River Jordan and there is a small lake called Huleh. This was not far from the northern border of the land that God had promised to give to Israel. Those kings were set to make war with Israel and they had a determination and confidence that they were going to win. Humanly speaking, they were really strong, and Israel would not have been able to overcome them. However, like many wars recorded in Scripture, there was victory when Israel stood on God's side. It was a time of waiting and great suspense. Israel was set to demonstrate their capacity as they depended on God.

God spoke to Joshua again and assured him of victory. He said, *“...Be not afraid because of them: for to morrow about this time will I deliver them up all slain before Israel: thou shalt hough their horses, and burn their chariots with fire”* (Josh 11:6).

God knew that Joshua needed to overcome all fears and thus He spoke to him. He assured Joshua that He would deliver those kings into his hand. Joshua came upon that large army suddenly by the waters of Merom, and they fell upon the enemies. Joshua had an upper hand because the strategy of surprise brought unexpected fear among the combined armies. God delivered them into the hand of Israel and there was minimal resistance. Joshua destroyed their cavalry, burned their chariots and disabled the horses. The chariots were the main strength of those armies.

The wars of Israel and the assistance that God gave truly prove that God does not forsake those who are His and who conform to His will. Joshua was not done. He was now ready to acquire the territory. He always looked to God as his source of strength and victory.

THOUGHT: God is always the source of the believer's strength.

PRAYER: Father, let me not underestimate Thy strength.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 16

JOSHUA 11

MATTHEW 11:27-30

*“Come unto me, all ye that
labour and are heavy laden,
and I will give you rest.”*

JOSHUA ACQUIRED THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

Hazor was a great kingdom, and Joshua took it. It was the only city that Joshua burned down. He smote all the other kings and destroyed them as Moses had commanded. Israel took the spoils of these cities and their cattle for themselves. They smote everyone and left none breathing. The acquisition of territory was the second phase in the war to possess Canaan. The war in the north acquired the last of the region that God had told Moses He would give to Israel. All the borders were secured. The war was won in this last territory much faster than in the other regions because Israel was already experienced. In addition, the kingdoms were afraid because they knew of the successes of Israel and thus fear ruled their minds.

Hear the sum of the territory conquered in the second phase: *“So Joshua took all that land, the hills, and all the south country, and all the land of Goshen, and the valley, and the plain, and the mountain of Israel, and the valley of the same; Even from the mount Halak, that goeth up to Seir, even unto Baalgad in the valley of Lebanon under mount Hermon: and all their kings he took, and smote them, and slew them. Joshua made war a long time with all those kings. There was not a city that made peace with the children of Israel, save the Hivites the inhabitants of Gibeon: all other they took in battle”* (Josh 11:16-19). They took time to conquer all that territory. Only Gibeon made peace with Israel. God hardened the hearts of the Canaanites to come up against Israel, and they were defeated. Joshua cut off all the Anakims and only a few were left in Gaza and Gath, who became the ancestors of Goliath. Joshua conquered all the land that God had promised and rested from war.

There was victory after victory for Israel because God had given them the land and fought for them. As believers today, we have the promises of God. Trust Him to the end, and you will have rest.

THOUGHT: There is perfect rest in God when we trust Him.

PRAYER: Father, may I lay my burdens surely on Thee and find rest.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 17

JOSHUA 12

NUMBERS 21:21-32

*“Thus Israel dwelt
in the land of the Amorites.”*

MOSES WAS THE PIONEER OF THE CONQUEST

Joshua and Israel were able to conquer all the land that God had promised to give them. Moses had conquered two kings in the expansive land of Moab beyond Jordan and had given the land to Israel. Joshua was tasked to capture Canaan proper. He was able to conquer thirty-one cities in total, from Jericho to Tirzah. In this, God fulfilled what He had promised to Israel. The last verse of Joshua 11 says that the land rested from war. This was logical because Israel had already fulfilled God’s mandate. It was now left to Joshua to go to the next phase of settling Israel in the acquired land. It had taken forty years for Israel to reach that land.

The following is a summary of that conquest.

The king of Hesbon, who was smitten by Moses and had his land east of Jordan taken, was the first casualty. It happened before the death of Moses and before Joshua became the leader of Israel. This was the record of that conquest by Moses: *“And Sihon would not suffer Israel to pass through his border: but Sihon gathered all his people together, and went out against Israel into the wilderness: and he came to Jahaz, and fought against Israel. And Israel smote him with the edge of the sword, and possessed his land from Arnon unto Jabbok, even unto the children of Ammon: for the border of the children of Ammon was strong. And Israel took all these cities...”* (Num 21:23-25).

Their king was Sihon who had expanded his territory far and wide. He was a mighty king and was unchallenged by other nations. He felt that he was strong enough to fight Israel. He attacked Israel without any provocation. He acted the same way as Balak who had hired Balaam to curse Israel.

THOUGHT: God gives wisdom and ability to fulfil His will.

PRAYER: Father, give me the grace and ability to fulfil my spiritual duties to Thee.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 18

JOSHUA 12

PSALM 138

*“The LORD will perfect
that which concerneth me...”*

THE FIRST PHASE OF CONQUEST WON BY ISRAEL

The move of Sihon gave opportunity to Moses to demonstrate that God was going to fight for them even in the conquest of Canaan proper. This also gave Moses the honour of initiating the war that would fulfil the promise of God to his people. Moses knew that he was not going to cross from Jordan into Canaan with Israel, but God guided him while he was still the leader of Israel.

The conquest of Sihon was an acid test, so to speak, for the children of Israel. God wanted to show them, while Moses was still alive, that His promise to them would come to pass. The boundaries of His land covered a large area. As strong as Sihon was, God delivered him into the hand of Israel. The land east of Jordan became the first phase in the territory that Israel occupied. Some of the tribes of Israel had an interest in making that land their permanent habitation.

It was Joshua who was tasked to subdivide the land to the tribes of Israel after conquering all the kings of Canaan. Therefore, the occupation of the land east of Jordan under Moses was in a way a lesson to Joshua, for he had a greater task ahead of him. These featured the messengers of God in action, and the hand of God in word and action was there to help to fulfil their assignment.

Moses conquered Og, king of Bashan and his land. This was another kingdom that had a large territory and its king was also a mighty king. Again, it would have been easy for Og to defeat Israel, but God was the strength of Israel. The text describes that land of Bashan and its king as of the remnant of the giants, that dwelt at Ashtaroth and at Edrei. It extended to Hermon, Salcah and all Bashan.

THOUGHT: God has appointed everyone's dwelling place.

PRAYER: Father, grant me satisfaction with what I possess.

LORD'S DAY, NOVEMBER 19

JOSHUA 12

ISAIAH 45:21-25

*“...there is none beside me.
...I am God, and there is none else.”*

MOSES SET AN EXAMPLE FOR JOSHUA

It is said that Moses, the servant of the LORD, gave the land for a possession unto the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh (Josh 12:6). Joshua 12 reviews what God did in fighting for them, presenting it in one story to show the continued activity of God. Moses also reminded Israel of what God had done. He said, *“But Sihon king of Heshbon would not let us pass by him: for the LORD thy God hardened his spirit, and made his heart obstinate, that he might deliver him into thy hand, as appeareth this day. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have begun to give Sihon and his land before thee: begin to possess, that thou mayest inherit his land. Then Sihon came out against us, he and all his people, to fight at Jahaz”* (Deut 2:30-32). The text gives the detailed steps of Israel's conquests to demonstrate that it was not Israel that was fighting the Canaanites, but it was God. He called Moses and told him that he was going to lead Israel to the land that He had promised their fathers. Moses had begun to subdivide the land among the tribes of Israel. God did not stop until the whole mission was accomplished.

There would always be questions about these wars, as we witnessed the massive loss of lives. However, every activity of God magnifies His attributes. He is a just God, and He is also sovereign. When He spoke to the prophets, He affirmed that He is God and besides Him there is none else. He calls on people of all nations to come to Him and be saved. Peace and hope come to everyone who trusts in Him. Even in these wars of Israel, His punitive will was the main cause of those conflicts because the nations had rejected Him and had done much evil.

THOUGHT: Every action of God is a doctrinal fact.

PRAYER: Father, let me discern Thy will in all things.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 20
JOSHUA 12
DEUTERONOMY 3:21-29

*“Ye shall not fear them:
for the LORD your God
he shall fight for you.”*

THE LIST OF KINGS CONQUERED BY ISRAEL

In the Exodus, there were a number of people who had survived the onslaught of Israel as a manifestation of God's grace. Those in Egypt who took part in the Passover by faith were spared from death. And in the capture of Jericho, Rahab and her family were spared.

The whole of Canaan west of Jordan was captured. There were the valleys, mountains, plains and springs in the wilderness. There were also the south and north countries of Canaan. Altogether, there were thirty-one cities and kings that Joshua conquered. The details of each battle to capture these cities had been told earlier. Here is the list as given in Joshua 12:9-24: *“The king of Jericho, one; the king of Ai, which is beside Bethel, one; The king of Jerusalem, one; the king of Hebron, one; The king of Jarmuth, one; the king of Lachish, one; The king of Eglon, one; the king of Gezer, one; The king of Debir, one; the king of Geder, one; The king of Hormah, one; the king of Arad, one; The king of Libnah, one; the king of Adullam, one; The king of Makkedah, one; the king of Bethel, one; The king of Tappuah, one; the king of Hephher, one; The king of Aphek, one; the king of Lasharon, one; The king of Madon, one; the king of Hazor, one; The king of Shimronmeron, one; the king of Achshaph, one; The king of Taanach, one; the king of Megiddo, one; The king of Kedesh, one; the king of Jokneam of Carmel, one; The king of Dor in the coast of Dor, one; the king of the nations of Gilgal, one; The king of Tirzah, one: all the kings thirty and one.”*

These achievements under Moses and Joshua showed God's faithfulness. They also showed that God is King of the whole earth. As His creatures, we submit to, and obey, Him. We look forward to reaching the promised eternal abode.

THOUGHT: God's grace is manifested to those who trust in Him.

PRAYER: Father, let this grace be for me also.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 21

JOSHUA 13

NUMBERS 14:1-10

*“If the LORD delight in us,
then he will bring us into this land,
and give it us...”*

JOSHUA QUALIFIED TO SUBDIVIDE THE LAND

God instructed Joshua on sub-dividing the land. He had fought all those wars and had captured much land. There was only a remnant of the Canaanites, but they were not resistant. The war was over and Joshua needed to subdivide the land among the tribes of Israel. The Levites were not to be given an inheritance. God guided Joshua in fulfilling this task. The land east of Jordan had already been given to two and a half tribes by Moses. That land and the tribes that took possession of them were described. God's promise was coming closer to be fulfilled.

Today, there are laws in nations that govern land acquisition and possession. These differ from nation to nation in some details, but they are generally the same. When the war ceased, Israel had acquired much territory, but there was still more. God told Joshua He would give the remaining land to them. He promised to drive out the remaining inhabitants. By then, Joshua was old and God wanted him to fulfil that task.

The next phase was much easier since there was no war. When Joshua crossed the River Jordan with the children of Israel into Canaan, it was not his first time setting foot on that land. He was there forty years before. Though it took a long time, it came to fulfilment. The only other person whom God allowed to reach Canaan among the twelve spies was Caleb. He must have played a big role in assisting Joshua in the division of the land. Furthermore, his presence was an encouragement to Joshua because they shared the same faith and were confident in their actions. God recognised and honoured their faith; while the rest of their generation perished in the wilderness. They had a testimony, having trusted God. Their trust came to fruition.

THOUGHT: It is a joy to see God's promise fulfilled.

PRAYER: Father, may I never give up trusting in Thee.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 22

JOSHUA 13

PROVERBS 9:1-10

*“Give instruction to a wise man,
and he will be yet wiser...”*

JOSHUA BEGAN SUB-DIVIDING THE LAND

It took time for Joshua to divide the land amongst all the tribes. God guided him in every detail. He had to settle the nine-and-a-half tribes in the land of Canaan west of Jordan. Though the Levites were not given inheritance, it was still the responsibility of Joshua to see to it that their welfare was taken care of. God spelled out the boundaries of the land that was yet to be acquired and the names of those cities. Much of this was on the coastal strip towards the Great Sea.

God told Joshua that He was going to drive out the inhabitants of those cities from before the children of Israel. One significant factor in the conquest of this remaining land is observed. God did not command Joshua to use military power to chase away those inhabitants. How God got these people out of the land is left to one's imagination. One thing is clear: God has all the resources and it was not a problem for Him to get those people out of the land. Joshua's task was to subdivide the land amongst the tribes of Israel.

The full picture of the land that God had given to Israel begins from the land east of Jordan that Moses had already given to the two-and-a-half tribes of Israel. The house of Levi became the thirteenth tribe of Israel, but this tribe was not counted. Since they had a spiritual duty among all the tribes, they were in a way assimilated into the rest of Israel, though they remained a distinct tribe. This tribe was not counted as a separate tribe, but they were scattered among all tribes by virtue of their duty. God used Jacob's adoption of the two sons of Joseph to make up the number. The house of Joseph thus contributed the two tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh.

THOUGHT: The wisdom that God gives is an asset to any leader.

PRAYER: Father, may Thy wisdom be a mainstay in my duties to Thee.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 23

JOSHUA 13

JUDGES 16:16-21

*“And he wist not that the LORD
was departed from him.”*

MOSES GAVE THE INHERITANCE TO REUBEN

The tribe of the eldest son of Jacob was the first to receive inheritance. The boundary of the land that was given to the tribe of Reuben is described in Joshua 13:15-23.

The fate of Balaam is mentioned in connection with the heritage of Reuben. It was the king of Moab who had hired Balaam to curse Israel. Here, Balaam was referred to as a soothsayer, while in Numbers he was called a prophet. In this sense, he was a false prophet. It was after that failure to curse Israel that he invented another scheme to defeat Israel. The intermarriage with the Moabites came with idolatry and espionage. Thus, the death knell sounded for Israel. Later, Samson fell into a similar trap among the Philistines (Judg 14-16). Moses gave land to the tribe of Reuben east of Jordan. They were thus settled.

The next tribe to receive inheritance was the tribe of Gad. The boundary of the tribe of Gad is described in Joshua 13:25-27. There was no given criterion that Moses had used to give that land to the tribe of Gad. They simply agreed with the tribes of Reuben and Manasseh to request Moses to give them that land. On his part, Moses simply consented and there was no opposition. God also confirmed this to Moses. These tribes were given that land on one condition. They were to go armed to the land of Canaan and fight until all their brethren had received their inheritance. They agreed to this and told Moses that they would leave their wives, children and cattle on this side of Jordan and go and fight for their brethren.

THOUGHT: Common sense can have a part to play in decision-making without disobeying God.

PRAYER: Father, may my decisions always be guided to fulfil Thy will.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 24

JOSHUA 13

JEREMIAH 1:17-19

*“And they shall fight against thee;
but they shall not prevail against thee...”*

JOSHUA HAD A PATTERN IN DIVIDING THE LAND

The blessings that Jacob uttered in Genesis 48 seemed to have played out in the division of the land of Canaan. Manasseh was the first son of Joseph, while Joseph was the eleventh son of Jacob. The father gave the birthright to Joseph and it was passed on to Ephraim, the second son of Joseph. Those prophetic words were fulfilled in these events.

Moses had set a pattern for the division of the whole land. He had sound administrative skills since the days of the wilderness journey. The book of Numbers tells of an accurate census that was taken when necessary. He had assistance from leaders of each tribe to get the information he needed. When it came to subdivision, it was useful to use that knowledge to allocate as each tribe needed. Moses had such wisdom because the hand of God was upon him.

The work of dividing the land east of Jordan to the two-and-a-half tribes served as a pattern for Joshua in allocating the land of Canaan to the remaining tribes. The tribe of Levi did not have any inheritance. However, they were not left entirely on their own. God had a definite plan for them which Joshua would implement in due course.

When God called Moses to lead Israel out of Egypt, He promised to bring them to the land of Canaan as He had told their fathers. The journey took a long time, much longer than expected. However, it ended when God fulfilled His promise. Joshua was appointed to complete what God had started by Moses. God is particular about His promises. Keep trusting in Him.

THOUGHT: God has multiple means of revealing His will.

PRAYER: Father, give me a discerning heart to know Thy will.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 25

JOSHUA 14

ACTS 17:26-28

*“...and hath determined the times
before appointed, and
the bounds of their habitation...”*

THE SETTING OF BOUNDARIES IN CANAAN BEGAN

As the land rested from war, Joshua and Eleazar the priest had a great task before them. They had to distribute the land among the nine-and-a-half tribes. They required godly wisdom to make decisions. As God guided, they adopted a method of setting boundaries for the tribes.

Joshua and Eleazar began setting the boundaries. The priest assisted Joshua in the task. The heads of the fathers of the tribes of Israel distributed the inheritance. They allocated the land using lots and it served the intended purpose. Paul said that God who made the world has determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of man's habitation (Acts 17:24-26). This truth played out in the background as the leaders made the effort to satisfy everybody. God was with them, and He enabled them to allocate the inheritance correctly.

Earlier, when Moses allocated the land east of Jordan to the two-and-a-half tribes, there was no dispute because those tribes had requested of their own volition to be given that land which was not included in the original promise. The providence of God led to those circumstances and those tribes were settled there.

In this allocation of the land west of Jordan, Caleb would ask for an inheritance in the place where he had set foot many years before. Caleb stood out as the oldest among the children of Israel to enter Canaan. His faithfulness to God made him an example to Israel.

THOUGHT: There was mutual agreement in the demarcation of boundaries.

PRAYER: Father, grant wisdom to Thy servants in settling property matters.

LORD'S DAY, NOVEMBER 26

JOSHUA 14

NUMBERS 13:30

*"Let us go up at once, and possess it;
for we are well able to overcome it."*

JOSHUA DIVIDED AS THE LORD HAD COMMANDED

All the tribes were to be allocated a place for their inheritance and they needed to be satisfied with it. Joshua had to attend to those needs right down to the needs of the families. It is noted in Bible history, and even up to today, that the question of land possession is an emotive issue. Joshua had to use his authority as leader of the nation to be able to satisfy all the tribes and families. He had administrative officers and a functioning system that he used to ensure that the people obeyed him. When he began the allocation, everything fell into place logically.

They began with the tribe of Judah because of Caleb. He was Joshua's companion in spying the land in the days of Moses. Caleb was the patriarch of the tribe and deserved a reward because he had faithfully followed God. That gave him the courage to make a specific request for his inheritance. He told of their exploits forty years before. He reminded Joshua of what God had said to Moses, the man of God, concerning both of them at that time in Kadeshbarnea. He said that he had brought a good report concerning their mission as was in his heart. He spoke of those who did not wholly follow God at that time. He reported that the brethren who had gone with them melted the heart of the people.

Caleb knew of the need to win a psychological war before winning the real physical war. The former governs the state of one's heart. When the heart is encouraged by the positive hope on the promises of God, that war is won already. Caleb knew all along of his commitment and God's promise, and thus he spoke with that confidence. He was an old man of eighty-five years, about the same age as Joshua. There were no other men of their age because they had perished in the wilderness due to their rebellion. Joshua had the moral support to fulfil his task.

THOUGHT: A heart committed to God achieves much.

PRAYER: Father, give me a persevering heart.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 27

JOSHUA 14

HEBREWS 11:34-40

*“And these all, having obtained
a good report through faith...”*

CALEB’S TESTIMONY

Caleb did not have a leadership position, but he was a respected elder in the community of Israel. He conducted himself with humility and won the respect of all Israel. The tribe of Judah also came first. Long life is one thing that is cherished by many in every generation. Caleb was able to give a testimony of what God had done for him.

He said that God had kept him alive all those years. He added that he was as strong then as when Moses had sent him to spy the land. Though he was twice as old then than he was earlier, he exuded great confidence. He asked Joshua to give him the mountain that was before them that God had promised to give him. It was the place he had earlier set foot on when he was on the spy mission. Joshua gave him the city of Hebron as his inheritance. It was in the environs of this city that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and their wives were buried. Thus, it became the cradle of the occupation of Canaan as God had said.

The faithfulness of Caleb was thus affirmed. He stood out as an example in faithfulness. He had the reputation as one who wholly followed the LORD God of Israel. The city that was given to him for an inheritance was also known as Arba. It was named after a great man among the Anakims. These were the giants who lived in this place before the occupation of Israel. With this beginning, God gave rest to the land from war. The first tribe west of Jordan was also settled. The testimony of Caleb also gave an indirect support to Joshua in dealing with the remaining tribes that needed to have an inheritance in the land of Canaan.

The giving of the land to Israel was the fulfilment of God’s promises which He had made repeatedly. He gives wisdom in attending to necessary duties. He also blesses those who remain faithful to Him. All the promises of salvation are surely for you too.

THOUGHT: Passionate spirituality leads to obedience and brings great rewards from God.

PRAYER: Father, give me a goal to finish my race as Caleb did.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 28

JOSHUA 15:1-20

NUMBERS 26:20-22

“...the families of Judah according to those that were numbered of them...”

THE BOUNDARIES OF THE TRIBE OF JUDAH

As Joshua continued to allocate the land of Canaan to the tribes of Israel, God gave him direction in every detail. The text describes the boundaries of the tribe of Judah in all the four winds of the earth. Judah and Ephraim were given the priority of the land division because God bestowed the right of that place to them. Joshua came from the tribe of Ephraim which was of the house of Joseph, while Caleb came from the house of Judah. They were the only leaders who followed God faithfully since they came out of Egypt. The narrative and listing of the places given to Judah were shown in great detail.

The text gives a list and description of these places. These may not carry much meaning to readers today and may even seem to be of little spiritual value. However, as much as it is part of Scripture, it has great importance and is profitable for our learning. The names of the tribes of Israel are not new at this point. The continuation of the narrative shows that God takes interest even in small matters because they authenticate His sovereignty. More so, they show His faithfulness because when He made the promises, He included all the finer details. These were written to authenticate that fact. The land that was allocated to Caleb was a tiny portion compared to the whole land, just as Caleb was one individual compared to the multitude of Israel. However, God's attention to him and his welfare illustrates how He deals with His children. He gives attention to everyone individually.

The southern border is described in the first three verses in detail. The names of places are given in a surveyor's language. This was necessary because the tribe of Judah was numbered and every family had to be allocated a particular territory. God gave equal rights to all to be allocated a portion. Each tribe or family was contented with its portion. The tribe of Judah took the lead in receiving the part allocated; God had good reason for giving them that priority.

THOUGHT: (Read Matthew 10:30.)

PRAYER: Father, may I give attention to every detail in my service unto Thee.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 29

JOSHUA 15:1-20

REVELATION 20:1-6

“...they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him...”

THE BORDERS OF JUDAH DESCRIBED

The physical features of the land helped to give a natural boundary as in the case of this border of Judah. *“And the east border was the salt sea, even unto the end of Jordan. And their border in the north quarter was from the bay of the sea at the uttermost part of Jordan”* (Josh 15:5). This did not require much description because of those natural boundaries. Also, at the time of allocating this land, the east of Jordan had been allocated to the tribes of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh. It was then easier for Joshua to determine the eastern boundary. God had also ensured that the portion He had promised to Caleb, as indicated before, fell within the allocated portion. The eastern border was thus settled.

The northern border turned out to be the longest border of the tribe of Judah. It is described in Joshua 15:6-11. The historic location in the portion of Judah was Jerusalem which was then occupied by the Jebusites, one of the tribes of Canaan. A little portion which later became part of Jerusalem was allocated to the tribe of Benjamin, as will be seen later. Gilgal, where Israel first encamped west of Jordan, was also included in the portion allocated to Judah. That border terminated at the Great Sea which formed the next border described. Jerusalem was destined to be a great city for generations.

When the rightful heir of the throne of Israel came to power, he made the city the seat of his kingdom. This was none other than David. Jacob, in his blessing of his twelve sons, gave the throne to Judah. However, when Israel asked for a king, God gave them Saul of the house of Benjamin. When the time came, David, from the house of Judah, was anointed to succeed Saul. The house of Judah did not cease to occupy the throne until the nation was in exile. The real throne that God ordained was not that of human kings, but the eternal reign of Christ. He came in the first advent and He was declared King. He will come again and reign in the New Jerusalem as King, not of Israel only, but of the whole earth.

THOUGHT: There is harmony in all of God's revelation.

PRAYER: Father, help me to know the full revelation of Scripture.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 30

JOSHUA 15:21-63

ACTS 4:24-28

*“...God, which hast made heaven,
and earth, and the sea,
and all that in them is...”*

THE WESTERN BORDER AND SETTLEMENT OF JUDAH

This was also a natural boundary and is described in one verse. The Great Sea was the western border. In the days of limited travel by sea in ships, the sea may have been useful only for fishing and a few other products. However, in history, that sea became the gateway to reach many lands and also brought much commercial value. The nations of the world traded to this day through this sea.

The port often mentioned in Scripture is Tyre. It was through this sea route that Jonah, many years later, tried to escape from God by sailing to Tarshish. Though not much had been said in the early days about the use of this sea by Judah as their border, it stood with that potential for them to keep in touch with other lands. In the New Testament, the disciples crisscrossed this sea to bring the Gospel to many parts of the Roman Empire. This western boundary was also a blessing to Judah. God always has a purpose in allocating habitation.

Caleb was prominent in Judah. As seen earlier, he was an elder of the tribe. He was allocated his portion by the commandment of God. He drove out the Anakims or giants that occupied that land before. These were the people whom Israel had feared and who had caused the delay of their occupation of Canaan. All along, Caleb had trusted that God would give them that land. The time had now come for him to occupy that place that God had promised him. He offered Achsah his daughter in marriage to anyone who would smite Kirjathsepher. Othniel (his brother's son) did so and Caleb gave him his daughter in marriage. His daughter asked him for the springs of water as heritage and he gave them to her. Othniel was also destined for leadership in the future.

The long list of cities given to Judah from verses 22 to 62, confirms the fulfilment of God's promise. Pockets of Canaanites were left in the land. The narrative and list were evidence of God's faithfulness to Israel. His word is always true.

THOUGHT: God rules even the waves of the sea.

PRAYER: Father, help me appreciate Thy hand in creation.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 1

JOSHUA 16

PSALM 75:6-7

*“...God is the judge:
he putteth down one,
and setteth up another.”*

THE INHERITANCE OF JOSEPH IN CANAAN

Joseph was the eleventh son of Jacob. However, it turned out that, in God's providence, the birthright was given to him. Jacob favoured him. That treatment roused the envy of his brethren, and they sold him to Egypt. That eventually exalted Joseph above all his brethren. Jacob adopted the two sons of Joseph (Manasseh and Ephraim) and gave the birthright to Ephraim the younger. When Jacob was about to depart, he bestowed a special blessing on Joseph. His acts were of God.

Since Joseph bore the flag of birthright bestowed on him by his father, his line was given priority in Canaan. When Moses began to subdivide the land to the tribes of Israel, half the tribe of Manasseh was given an inheritance east of Jordan. The other half of the tribe of Manasseh was to be given their inheritance on the western side. In this regard, Manasseh had double inheritance. In addition, Manasseh's younger brother was given a greater portion in the inheritance. The tribe was the second to receive their inheritance in the land of Canaan after the tribe of Judah.

The heritage of the children of Joseph was from Jordan by Jericho (Josh 16:1). This was not far from Gilgal where Israel had camped in the land of Canaan. There, Joshua assigned each of them their inheritance. Joshua described the portion of Ephraim in detail. Since he also came from the tribe, his heritage was included on the side of Ephraim.

Before he died, Joseph had also given a commandment that the children of Israel were to carry his bones from Egypt for burial in the land of Canaan. When he died, he was embalmed and put in a coffin in Egypt. He was buried in Canaan in the heritage of his children.

THOUGHT: The prophetic acts of God never fail.

PRAYER: Father, give me a clear understanding of Thy sovereignty.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 2

JOSHUA 16

ROMANS 14:16-19

*“Let us therefore
follow after the things
which make for peace...”*

THE DESCRIPTION OF THE HERITAGE OF EPHRAIM

This description of the heritage of Joseph is not as detailed as that of Judah's, but it tells of the length and breadth of their heritage. Here is a comment by Matthew Henry:

The portions allotted to Ephraim and Manasseh are not so particularly described as those of the other tribes; we have only the limits and boundaries of them, not the particular cities in them, as before we had the cities of Judah and afterwards those of the other tribes. For this no reason can be assigned, unless we may suppose that Joshua being himself of the children of Joseph they referred it to him alone to distribute among them the several cities that lay within their lot, and therefore did not bring in the names of their cities to the great council of their princes who sat upon this affair, by which means it came to pass that they were not inserted with the rest in the books.

The division and allocation of the land was a big task. Families within each tribe, given their inheritance, had to be satisfied. The officers who assisted Joshua in this task were useful, because they were closer to the people and understood the needs of each family. They were also to settle disputes that might occur to ensure that there was peace in the whole process. Also, as indicated earlier, the Levites would be among them and their welfare rested on the tribe that they lived with.

Joshua 16 continues to describe the boundaries of Ephraim. It was from Atarothaddar to Bethhoron, and the border also went west to the Great Sea which was a natural boundary, like Jordan River in the east. The description of these allocations indicated an administrative exercise that went smoothly.

THOUGHT: God's work is done decently and orderly.

PRAYER: Father, help me to administer my daily responsibilities with orderliness in the spirit of love.

LORD'S DAY, DECEMBER 3

JOSHUA 16

DEUTERONOMY 29:29

*"The secret things belong unto
the LORD our God..."*

THE CITIES OF THE TRIBE OF EPHRAIM

The allocation done by Joshua was a contrast to the murmuring that characterised their journey from Egypt under Moses. This is explained in the way in which God led Joshua. God told him to be courageous and He would be with him wherever he went. Also, God had fulfilled His promise in chasing away the Canaanites and giving the land to Israel. In addition, the fate of the transgressors of God's commandments (like Achan) was a reminder to Israel that they needed to obey Joshua in all things.

Each tribe waited patiently for their turn to receive their inheritance. The heritage of the tribe of Ephraim in relation to the prophetic blessings of Jacob was a foregone conclusion and that heritage came to their hand naturally. The utterances of Jacob were revelations and their fulfillment authenticated the truthfulness of God's Word.

The cities that were given to Ephraim were among the inheritance of Manasseh. The land was divided into grazing fields, cities and villages. The cities were fortified with high walls and secured gates. These were meant to give protection to the residents. Villages were also secured though they were smaller. All the people retired to the cities at nightfall and would be out in the fields during the day. The cities and villages that were given to Ephraim were specified. In this settlement, the prophecy of Jacob was played out again. This also affirms that God's decrees are eternal, and no man is able to change them. He has declared and He will fulfil them.

The children of Ephraim did not drive away the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer. The command of God was that they were to chase away all of them. Since there is no comment about this matter, it is assumed that they might have taken the cue from Joshua and the elders of Israel who had spared the Gibeonites, and made them servants. Ephraim followed suit and put them under tribute.

THOUGHT: I must have discernment of sacred things in God's Word.

PRAYER: (Pray for a willing heart to answer God's call to full-time service.)

MONDAY, DECEMBER 4

JOSHUA 17

PROVERBS 1:1-7

*“...and a man of understanding shall
attain unto wise counsels.”*

THE HERITAGE OF MANASSEH WEST OF JORDAN

The half tribe of Manasseh was given their inheritance west of Jordan. The other half had been allocated land east of Jordan by Moses. Manasseh was also included in the blessings of Jacob when he adopted both the sons of Joseph. The lot of the tribe west of Jordan was taken twice because Manasseh was a big tribe.

The inheritance of the tribe west of Jordan was given to Machir. He was the firstborn of Manasseh and the father of Gilead. He was given the land of Gilead and Bashan. This was like a double portion for the tribe of Manasseh since half the tribe had received inheritance east of Jordan. Others named in the text are Abiezer, Helek and all the male sons of Manasseh. This tribe was part of the wider tribe of Joseph. Prior to his death, Jacob had given special blessing to the family of Joseph and extended it in adopting Joseph's two sons; he gave the birthright to Ephraim. Though the patriarch favoured the younger son according to God's providence, he also gave special blessings to Manasseh. His words remained up to the time of the settlement.

Each family was given an heritage and all were satisfied. This was an important element in that situation because Joshua had to deal with all the tribes. It was God who directed Joshua because He had appointed the dwelling place of everyone. This was evident here because the people whom Joshua was dealing with were sinners. The ill motive of covetousness would not be far from them. However, God granted them grace and subdued any sinful reaction against Joshua. Thus, the division went smoothly. There were divisions and sub-divisions of the land until every family had received its portion.

It was previously recorded that the tribe of Manasseh had asked Joshua for a second lot because it was a larger tribe. Joshua took their request as from God and consented to it. The leader himself was also part of the tribes of Israel and God granted him wisdom so that he was not seen as favouring any of the tribes in this task.

THOUGHT: God-given wisdom fulfils all according to His will.

PRAYER: Father, give me wisdom like that of Joshua.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 5

JOSHUA 17

NUMBERS 27:1-11

*“...shalt surely give them
a possession of an inheritance
among their father’s brethren...”*

THE DAUGHTERS OF ZELOPHEHAD GIVEN HERITAGE

Joshua ensured that the promise that God had made through Moses to the daughters of Zelophehad was fulfilled. They were one of the families of the house of Joseph. Zelophehad had five daughters, without any sons. This was not the first time that these women were featured in connection with the settlement in Canaan.

Their request to Moses concerning the inheritance of their father is told in Numbers 27:1-11. Since families were named after the sons, the daughters were counted in the family that they were married into. The daughters of Zelophehad were concerned about the heritage of their father because he had no son. When they expressed this concern to Moses, there was no immediate answer. However, Moses promised them that he would ask God about it. God granted their request saying that they were to be married within the tribe of their father and the inheritance of their father would not go to another tribe. That heritage would also retain the name of their father.

Moses then conveyed God’s message to them that He had consented to their request. Now, under Joshua’s leadership, the time of the actual granting of the heritage had come. The daughters of Zelophehad approached Joshua and Eleazar, and asked for their heritage as Moses had promised them. Joshua 17:3-4: *“But Zelophehad, the son of Hephher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, had no sons, but daughters: and these are the names of his daughters, Mahlah, and Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. And they came near before Eleazar the priest, and before Joshua the son of Nun, and before the princes, saying, The LORD commanded Moses to give us an inheritance among our brethren. Therefore, according to the commandment of the LORD he gave them an inheritance among the brethren of their father.”* The portion of inheritance was given to them and the matter was thus settled.

THOUGHT: Sons and daughters are gifts from God to families. It is the parents' God-given duty to bring them up in the fear and admonition of God.

PRAYER: Father, we praise Thee for Thy gifts of sons and daughters.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 6

JOSHUA 17

1 KINGS 4:1-19

*“And Solomon had twelve officers
over all Israel...”*

THE BOUNDARIES OF MANASSEH WERE DESCRIBED

The tribe of Ephraim preceded the half tribe of Manasseh in acquiring the inheritance. However, when the lot was cast for Manasseh, they became neighbours. It is recorded that ten portions fell to Manasseh beside the land of Gilead and Bashan.

Asher, Issachar and Ephraim were their neighbours. All the towns in the land that was allocated to Manasseh were given to them for their heritage. During the reign of King Solomon, these places were heritages of these tribes and the king assigned a prince to each tribe. The list of those officers was given. Since the tribes did not change their heritage from the time of Joshua to the time of the kings, it was convenient to use those divisions as administrative units. God is a God of order, and He gave these provisions to Israel to make the task easier for those who were entrusted with the work of leadership.

An additional lot was given to Manasseh, and Joshua also gave consent to that lot so that their portion was expanded. It was added that they did not drive out the Canaanites but put them under tribute (Josh 17:12-13). They might have borrowed the idea from the fate of the Gibeonites. The Canaanites were subdued and made to serve. It was not an easy task for they had to secure the land for themselves and then decide the fate of those people who were previously the bona fide owners of the land. There were many intricacies and decisions to be made but, on the whole, the command of God was their guide. The Canaanites were neutralised. The tribe of Manasseh got their inheritance and settled in Canaan.

The narrative is a step-by-step fulfilment of God's promise to settle Israel. Details of every tribe were given and incidental occurrences were settled mutually as Joshua continued his duty.

THOUGHT: Trust God and He will lead and guide you to the lot that He has ordained for you.

PRAYER: Father, guide my actions to fulfil all Thy will.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 7

JOSHUA 18:1-10

GENESIS 49:8-10

*“The sceptre shall not depart from Judah,
nor a lawgiver from between his feet,
until Shiloh come...”*

NEW METHOD OF SETTING BOUNDARIES

Israel's first stop when they entered Canaan was Gilgal. Then they moved to Shiloh, a city in the land allocated to Ephraim. This made the city a religious centre of Israel for a long time to come. In Joshua 8, Joshua continued subdividing the land and setting boundaries. There were then seven tribes that had not received inheritance. Joshua appointed men to survey the land and to give him the description. They did so and Joshua cast lots for the remaining tribes that had not received inheritance. Joshua and all the tribes could not settle down before all the others had received their part. It was their obligation to settle all in the land.

The whole congregation moved to Shiloh. The name of the city means tranquillity or rest. The name of the city Shiloh was significant because of Jacob's prophetic blessings to Judah. He made reference to this name as referring to the Messiah, the Anointed One. It remained a religious centre of Israel throughout the period of the judges, up to the time of Eli the priest. It was situated north of Bethel, and Israel camped there because Joshua had identified it as a suitable place. No explanation was given for this move but the tribes continued camping with the same formation they had since they came out of Egypt.

Matthew Henry shed light on this: “The place to which the tabernacle was removed, and in which it was set up. It was *Shiloh*, a city in the lot of Ephraim, but lying close upon the lot of Benjamin. Doubtless God himself did some way or other direct them to this place, for he had promised to *choose the place* where he would make *his name to dwell*, Deut 12:11.”

Moreover, Joshua came from the tribe of Ephraim, and Shiloh might have been closer to his heritage. However, God did not choose the place because of Joshua per se. God chose it according to His own good will.

THOUGHT: In God's order, every factor is significant.

PRAYER: Father, may I value every revelation of Thine.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 8

JOSHUA 18:1-10

ACTS 4:34-37

*“Neither was there any among
them that lacked...”*

THE MOVE TO SHILOH AND THE NEW APPROACH

Everybody looked to Joshua as their national leader and all the people were ready to obey what he said. He instructed each of the tribes to choose three men. This was an exercise to ensure that everything was done justly and openly for all tribes. He assigned those men to go throughout all the remaining land that had to be subdivided.

They were to demarcate the land and give a description of each portion and return to Joshua with their report. This survey would divide the land into seven parts. When Joshua had received their reports, he then cast lots to determine the land that each of the tribes would be allocated.

They were charged not to touch the boundaries of the tribes that had already received their inheritance. The settlement of all tribes was an urgent task that was before Joshua, and he needed to get things moving. All the other tribes including those that had received inheritance east of Jordan were held up in the camp at Shiloh. It was their duty to hold together until all the tribes were settled.

The spirit of unity that they demonstrated was a contrast to their constant murmuring in the wilderness under Moses. They knew that they were responsible for obeying God and Joshua until their aim was achieved. It was God who promised to give Israel the land, and Joshua was given the duty to fulfil that promise.

It was an uphill task for Joshua to fulfil all that God had commanded. It is not indicated how he was able to accomplish so much without modern methods of keeping records. Much was done by word of mouth, and there was mutual trust among them. Joshua was able to write, a skill that came from God. It served its purpose, and Joshua's writings were retained as the Word of God.

THOUGHT: God uses His servants as vessels to fulfil His purposes.

PRAYER: Father, Thy purposes will surely come to pass. Give me an obedient heart.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 9

JOSHUA 18:1-10

1 TIMOTHY 6:6-9

*“And having food and raiment
let us be therewith content.”*

GUIDANCE IN ASSIGNING LAND

Joshua looked to God in assigning the land to each of the tribes. Casting of lots was a means of seeking the direction of God in this final phase of assigning inheritance to the remaining seven tribes. The Levites and the tribes that had received their inheritance east of Jordan were excluded.

As indicated before, the Levites were not given an inheritance because they served all the other tribes in the spiritual service. Moreover, God was their inheritance. God ordered another means for their upkeep. They were assigned cities among all the tribes.

The men who were sent to demarcate the land reported back to Joshua and, when he had cast lots, he gave the inheritance to the remaining tribes. The long-awaited promise was then coming to fruition. It was an achievement worthy of giving praise and thanks to God.

As indicated earlier, the issue of land ownership is emotive to this day. Just as God guided Joshua in the allocation of the land to Israel, we must rely on Him to guide us in such matters today. The spirit of covetousness must be removed from the heart so that the spiritual/divine approach is allowed to take its course.

Heritage from parents is also another means of acquiring property. This is an opportunity to give thanks unto God, for every good gift comes from Him.

Joshua did not abdicate his responsibility. Like Moses, he was both a civil and a spiritual leader. He did not do anything without seeking God's will. He persevered to the end and his testimony at the end of this book spoke of his faithfulness. Let us always persevere to finish the task that God has given to us, and we shall have an eternal reward awaiting us.

THOUGHT: Contentment is the right approach to property matters.

PRAYER: Father, teach me always to remember that godliness with contentment is great gain.

LORD'S DAY, DECEMBER 10

JOSHUA 18:11-28

GENESIS 28:10-19

*“And he called the name of
that place Bethel...”*

THE INHERITANCE OF BENJAMIN

When the camp of Israel moved to Shiloh, there were yet seven tribes that had not received inheritance. The first among these was the tribe of Benjamin. Benjamin was the lastborn son of Jacob. He was the only one born in the land of Canaan after Jacob came out of Haran, the house of Laban. He was the second son of Rachel. After Joseph was sold into Egypt, Benjamin took Joseph's place and became the beloved son of his father Jacob. Jacob blessed him, together with all his other sons. The tribe of Benjamin played a significant role in the history of Israel. Here, the focus is on their receiving the inheritance from Joshua.

The description of the heritage of Benjamin covers the lot between the children of Judah and Joseph. This is given in great detail. It reached Jordan on the side of Jericho to Bethaven. It also went to the side of Luz which is Bethel, south of Bethhoron. Luz (later renamed Bethel by Jacob) was the place where Jacob had slept the first night when he was running away from his brother Esau (Gen 28). It was here that God appeared to him in a vision that night. He then said that the place was none other than the house of God, and he named it Bethel. He also made an altar from the stones that he had used for his pillow and poured the oil that he carried in a bottle as an offering to God.

The name Bethel remained for generations and the heritage of Benjamin retained that historic place. Jericho is also mentioned as part of their heritage. It will not be forgotten how God delivered that city to Israel in that first conquest by Joshua. (A Bible atlas would be useful in identifying all the places named in the heritage of the tribes of Israel.) Kirjathjearim was a city of Judah and it was a border town of Benjamin. The western border went to the well of waters of Nephtoah. God uses these details to show the truthfulness of His Word.

THOUGHT: The place of everyone's abode is appointed by God.

PRAYER: Father, may I see the place Thou hast appointed for my abode as the best.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 11

JOSHUA 18:11-28

ROMANS 1:18-23

*“...when they knew God,
they glorified him not as God,
neither were thankful...”*

THE LORD GAVE CANAAN TO ISRAEL FOR A REASON

The heritage that God was giving to Israel was inhabited by the Canaanites, who had built cities and cultivated productive land as well as grazing livestock. It was a ready-made home for Israel when God chased the Canaanites away and gave the land to Israel. The nation had to rely on God for protection and direction in deciding the matters of their nation.

In the book of Deuteronomy, Moses had made long speeches to prepare the nation for that new habitation. The main focus for their nation was to obey God. Moses wrote for them the book of the Law and they were required to adhere to the commands given in the book for their heritage to be sustained. God spoke to them through Moses and told them why they were thus treated. Moses said, *“And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live”* (Deut 8:3). The stress was on the Word of God, and not the extent of the boundary of the heritage. The land was a gift to them from God. Apart from casting lots to identify the heritage of each tribe, Joshua also considered the size of each tribe and their needs. He made all these decisions as guided by God.

The allocation of Benjamin was made with their needs in view. It was during the exodus that God delivered the Moral Law to Israel. And these commandments of God were opposed to the ways of the Canaanites who did not know God. Through the Canaanites' opposition of Israel, we see God's punitive will. He showed His justice, and He used Israel as His instrument. At the same time, He was punishing the Canaanites for rejecting Him as Lord and God of the universe. Thus, He gave their land to Israel.

THOUGHT: God's justice is balanced justice based on the truth.

PRAYER: Father, may I understand Thy mode of operation in Thy dealings in my life.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 12

JOSHUA 18:11-28

PSALM 46:1-7

*“...the city of God,
the holy place of the tabernacles
of the most High.”*

JERUSALEM: PART OF THE HERITAGE OF BENJAMIN

The land allocated to Benjamin included Jerusalem. At that time, the city was called the city of Jebusi. Then, it did not have the significance that it would come to have in the course of history. The border of Benjamin was before the valley of Hinnom. This is described in Joshua 18:16-17. The mention of *“the valley of the giants...to the side of Jebusi”* (Josh 18:16) is reference to the former inhabitants of that land. Those were the people that the ten spies said they were not able to conquer.

The details and the names of places given also indicated the concern that Joshua had in settling the children of Israel in Canaan. He used the task force that he had appointed to survey the land, and they gave him these detailed descriptions. He ensured that all received their rightful due.

The north border of Benjamin is also described. The city of Arabah was the northern landmark. The other was the northern bay of the Salt Sea at the southern end of Jordan. These were natural landmarks and it made the work of those people who surveyed the land much easier. In this division of the land, it was also needful to consider the available resources that would be useful in the economic activities of the inhabitants. God knew of all these, and He guided every step of the process of the demarcation of the heritage of the tribes.

The Jordan River was the eastern border. This was again a natural boundary. The land across the river was already occupied. All the families of Benjamin received their inheritance. Gibeon and Ramah were among the fourteen cities given to Benjamin. Also included was Jerusalem, the city which would eventually be made the seat of the kingdom and also the centre of worship. Since then, the city has not lost its prominence. Benjamin is the tribe that Jacob said *“shall ravin as a wolf: in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil”* (Gen 49:27). God’s appointment stands. This was Benjamin’s heritage in Canaan.

THOUGHT: It was the hand of God that gave Israel their due heritage.

PRAYER: Father, may I be as obedient as Joshua.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 13

JOSHUA 19:1-9

PSALM 33:1-9

*“For the word of the LORD is right;
and all his works are done in truth.”*

THE HERITAGE OF THE TRIBE OF SIMEON

When the tribe of Benjamin had received their inheritance, there were yet six tribes that needed to be allocated their inheritance. Joshua 19 records that Eleazar the priest and Joshua cast lots in Shiloh to identify the lot of each of the remaining tribes. They followed the description of the land that the task force had prepared. Each of the tribes received their heritage. This marked the end of assigning the inheritance to Israel, and fulfilled God’s promise totally.

Joshua 19 begins with the tribe of Simeon. This tribe was not given a new heritage but was accommodated within the tribe of Judah. There were specific locations accorded to them. This was not random allocation. Joshua and Eleazar cast lots and the part fell onto the tribe of Simeon. Since it was God who assigned the heritage of each, it must therefore also agree with His eternal decree.

Before Simeon became a tribe (while the father of the tribe was still alive), the nature of their heritage was already described. The prophetic utterances of Jacob spelt out a disaster for Simeon and Levi (Gen 49:7). It referred to an earlier incident at Shechem after they had come from Haran. They blackmailed the family of Shechem and slew them. Their actions were against the wishes of their father and were indeed very cruel (Gen 34:20-31). These were the acts of two individuals, but the curse followed their descendants. For Simeon, the scattering that Jacob had spoken about was fulfilled in their heritage. (It was also fulfilled on a positive note in the case of Levi because the Levites were assigned spiritual duties. Thus, it was necessary for them to be assigned residence among all the tribes of Israel. They were thus scattered.) The number of cities that were given to Simeon was thirteen and these cities are listed in Joshua 19:1-9. They were thus assimilated. It had probably never occurred to the sons of Jacob then that the utterances of their father would have these far-reaching implications. As it was within God’s plan, it came to pass as accurately as God had intended.

THOUGHT: God always moves with purpose and plan.

PRAYER: Father, I thank Thee for the harmony of Thy revelations.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 14

JOSHUA 19:10-16

ISAIAH 26:8-9

“...when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.”

THE HERITAGE OF THE TRIBE OF ZEBULUN

The heritage of Zebulun was the third lot that Joshua and Eleazar cast. The borders of the tribe were identified. The names of their cities and places that had landmarks are all listed in Joshua 19:10-15. They were given twelve cities. These places were given to them in line with the size of the tribe. This was what Jacob had said of this tribe: *“Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea; and he shall be for an haven of ships; and his border shall be unto Zidon”* (Gen 49:13). The mention of Zidon (that renowned ancient city) gives the biblical record a unity in truth. It is about thirty kilometres north of Tyre, and was a known seaport. It is mentioned severally in the Bible and is connected with many biblical events. It was one of the Canaanite cities that fell into the heritage of Zebulun. Below is an observation of these heritages by F.B. Meyer:

The position of Zebulun and the following tribes in the land of promise is accurately foretold. Compare the allotments of Joshua 18:1-28. Notice the exclamation of the dying man in Genesis 49:18. Such a spirit of waiting cannot be disappointed. See Isaiah 26:8-9. Joseph's blessing is pre-eminently beautiful: *Fruitful!* This is mentioned twice, reminding us of John 15:8. But fruitfulness is only possible where there is the *wall* for separation, and the *well* for communion. When these are present, the branches droop over the wall with clusters of blessings to a thirsty world. Let us seek divine strength and ask that the mighty hands of the God of Jacob may be placed under our own poor weak hands! See Psalm 141:1. The separated life is the crowned life. To the heart of the dying man came the memory of his native land and its mountains. What mountains are to a country, God is to His people!

Zebulun followed in the steps of the earlier tribes. They acquired their heritage as their lot determined. They were satisfied knowing that it was God who gave them that heritage.

THOUGHT: God is the God of all tribes on earth.

PRAYER: Father, may righteousness be my greatest heritage.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 15

JOSHUA 19:17-23

MATTHEW 6:24-34

*“Take therefore no thought
for the morrow...”*

THE HERITAGE OF THE TRIBE OF ISSACHAR

The heritage of Issachar was the fourth lot that Joshua and Eleazar cast. Genesis 49:14-15 gives us Jacob’s prophecy concerning Issachar: *“Issachar is a strong ass couching down between two burdens: And he saw that rest was good, and the land that it was pleasant; and bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant unto tribute.”* The inheritance of Issachar is described in Joshua 19:17-23. The tribe was given sixteen cities. Like all the other tribes, their heritage is described in detail and this reflects the efficiency of the leaders of Israel that ensured none of the tribes were left without a heritage. It also demonstrates that God is all along the God of decency and order. Matthew Henry noted:

All Jacob’s sons were living. His calling them together was a precept for them to unite in love, not to mingle with the Egyptians; and foretold that they should not be separated, as Abraham’s sons and Isaac’s were, but should all make one people. We are not to consider this address as the expression of private feelings of affection, resentment, or partiality; but as the language of the Holy Ghost, declaring the purpose of God respecting the character, circumstances, and situation of the tribes which descended from the sons of Jacob, and which may be traced in their histories.

The current division of the heritage marks the last lap in Joshua’s race to fulfil God’s long-term promise that He would give the land to the children of Israel. When God first mentioned this to Abraham, it was not something that would come to pass within a short time. At that time, the patriarch did not have even one child. However, the God of heaven and earth never fails to keep His promises.

The allocation of these heritages was moving smoothly and the whole congregation of Israel was attentive to the words of Joshua.

THOUGHT: The Holy Spirit gives contentment in the heart.

PRAYER: Father, may I seek Thy kingdom above all things.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 16

JOSHUA 19:24-51

PROVERBS 22:1-5

*“By humility and the fear of the LORD
are riches, and honour, and life.”*

THE HERITAGE OF THE LAST THREE TRIBES

The heritage of the tribe of Asher was the fifth lot that the leaders of Israel cast. Their heritage is described in Joshua 19:24-31. Anna, the old woman featured at the birth of Christ in Luke 2:36-38, came from this tribe. Asher was the eighth son of Jacob. His mother was Zilpah, the maidservant of Leah. These were Jacob's word concerning Asher: *“Out of Asher his bread shall be fat, and he shall yield royal dainties”* (Gen 49:20). This is a positive prophetic blessing which came to pass.

The heritage of the tribe of Naphtali is also described in Joshua 19:32-39. It was the sixth lot out of seven last allocations to the tribes of Israel. The total number of cities assigned to Naphtali was nineteen. All families in the tribe received their inheritance. They followed the same pattern as all the other tribes. This was Jacob's description of Naphtali: *“Naphtali is a hind let loose: he giveth goodly words”* (Gen 49:21). It was brief, but this positive remark from God was great.

The lot of the heritage of the tribe of Dan was the seventh and last lot. The heritage of Dan is described in Joshua 19:40-48. The tribe was assigned eighteen cities. The tribe of Dan fought the Canaanites and captured the city of Leshem, and called it Dan, after their father.

All tribes were thus settled. The narrative ended, *“These are the inheritances, which Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel, divided for an inheritance by lot in Shiloh before the LORD, at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. So they made an end of dividing the country”* (Josh 19:51).

This marked the end of the final race to capture Canaan. Joshua completed dividing the land and he was given Timnathserah in Ephraim as his family's heritage. Joshua and Eleazar were thus used by God to fulfil His long-term promise.

THOUGHT: Leadership requires a fatherly spirit as that of Joshua.

PRAYER: Father, give us leaders today who are endued with humility.

LORD'S DAY, DECEMBER 17

JOSHUA 20

MATTHEW 5:20-22

*“...Thou shalt not kill;
and whosoever shall kill shall be
in danger of the judgment...”*

THE NEED FOR CITIES OF REFUGE

All Israel had been settled in their inheritance. It was then necessary to put in place a desirable administrative set-up. This was needful as a means of solving and preventing problems that were common to all nations. One of the things that God commanded was the setting up of cities of refuge. It was anticipated that there would be people guilty of manslaughter. These referred to those who might kill someone accidentally, and in turn, be hunted by another seeking revenge for the dead person. In order to prevent a double death, it was needful to have a place of refuge to secure such lives. God gave a command to the leaders of Israel to set aside six cities of refuge to assist those who might be guilty.

God reminded Joshua to set aside the cities of refuge as he commenced residence in his inheritance. Like Moses, Joshua served as a civil leader as well as a religious leader. The command to set aside the cities of refuge was not new to Joshua. God had already commanded through Moses that these cities were to be identified and set apart for the intended purpose. God told Joshua to appoint these cities as commanded earlier. The original command to Moses is recorded in Numbers 35:6, 11, and 14. Of the six cities that were to be set apart, three would be on the western side of Jordan, and three on the eastern side. The purpose of these cities was to provide refuge for one guilty of manslaughter.

These cities were to be taken from the tribes and given to the Levites. Since they were spiritual ministers and conversant with the Law, they were the right people to judge cases of criminal nature. They would, in their judgment, prescribe a penalty or pardon depending on the facts presented to them. As Israel was so used to war, and their occupation of Canaan was won through a vigorous bloody campaign, their psyche was characterised by the shedding of blood. Thus, there was a need for these cities of refuge.

THOUGHT: A godly nation needs just laws in place for good order.

PRAYER: Father, may I appreciate the just laws of my nation.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 18

JOSHUA 20

1 JOHN 3:13-16

*“We know that we have
passed from death unto life,
because we love the brethren...”*

THE REMEDY FOR MANSLAUGHTER

God knew that there would be cases of manslaughter. Such deaths would thus be thoroughly investigated and all facts put together and witnesses called in to testify. Eventually, a just judgment would be made. When such an incident occurred, the first thing the offender would do was to flee to one of the cities of refuge. He would then have to follow the prescribed procedure. This was a lesson to Israel in two ways: each person had to not only be careful not to hurt anyone, but also to always take precautions to preserve life. The keeping of the commandment not to kill goes hand in hand with this requirement in the case of manslaughter.

The function of the cities of refuge was that a manslayer could flee to one of these cities, which were to be located proportionally in the whole land of Israel. The manslayer would declare his cause to the elders of that city. The elders would listen very carefully and then certify the case to be on the right course. The man would then be admitted and given a place to stay. He would be given protection from the wrath of the avenger of blood. This was a law that reflected order in civil affairs, which was needed in the new nation. It required immediate attention because the shedding of blood without a righteous cause was a serious offence.

The penalty for the intentional shedding of blood was capital punishment. This was the earliest law that was given long before the time of Moses. God declared thus to Noah: *“Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man”* (Gen 9:6). God did not only forbid murder, He also declared the sanctity of life. Thus, He put in place laws that would prevent incidences of the loss of life. The sin of murder entered the human race at the Fall of Adam. The first murder occurred in the first family when Cain murdered Abel, his brother. Thus, the current law was given on the basis of those experiences.

THOUGHT: It is necessary to obey God, preserve life and do justice to all parties involved.

PRAYER: Father, may I always be mindful to preserve life.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 19

JOSHUA 20

GALATIANS 5:19-21

*“...they which do such things
shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”*

PREVENTION OF DOUBLE DEATH

The law of the cities of refuge was meant to protect life. The slayer would not be delivered to the avenger of blood. The motivation of the avenger was anger, not reason. The escape and protection that was given in the city of refuge was first to pacify the anger of the avenger and, second, to give time for justice to be done on both sides.

Accidental deaths also happen today, and the police would do the same thing that the elders of those cities did. Those elders were to bring the case before a court for right judgment. When it was proven that indeed that person had killed his neighbour without intention, he would not be allowed to return home immediately. He was to reside in the city of refuge until the death of the high priest who was in office at the time of the offence. After that, he was allowed to return. The cities were thus in effect government offices that attended to such civil matters. Joshua was thus to set aside those cities.

The first city was Kedesh in the land of Naphtali. This is distinguished from other cities with the same name. It was specifically the one in the land allocated to the tribe of Naphtali. The second city of refuge was Shechem in Mt Ephraim. It was a walled city near Mt Gerizim. It is mentioned severally in the life of the patriarchs. Abraham once camped there, and Jacob's family resided there when they travelled from Haran. It was now within the heritage of Ephraim and made one of the cities of refuge. Kirjatharba, also called Hebron, rounded up the three cities west of Jordan that were set apart for refuge. It was here that Abraham and the other fathers were buried. It was also the first city that David occupied as king of Israel for seven years. In the east of Jordan was Bezer, in the heritage of Reuben. It was also strategic for the purpose it was appointed. The other one was Ramoth in Gilead belonging to the tribe of Gad. The last was Golan in the northern part in Bashan, the heritage of Manasseh. All were strategically placed.

THOUGHT: The cities of refuge represent salvation offered to the guilty, and forgiveness to all sinners through Christ.

PRAYER: Father, grant my desire for salvation and forgiveness.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 20

JOSHUA 21:1-7

DEUTERONOMY 10:8-10

“Wherefore Levi hath no part nor inheritance with his brethren...”

THE POSITION OF THE LEVITES

Since the Levites were not given their own inheritance, God scattered them among all the tribes of Israel. He commanded that they would be given cities to dwell in. Presently, all the tribes had been given their inheritance. The Levites spoke to Eleazar, Joshua and the heads of the fathers that they should fulfil for them what God had commanded.

There were three main families of the Levites: Kohath, Gershon and Merari. Joshua 21:1-7 gives the names of all the forty-eight cities that were given to the Levites. They were distributed among all the tribes. The Levites were the last people to get a settlement in Canaan before they were allowed to move out of the camp.

When the Levites requested for cities to dwell in, their request was legitimate because they were acting upon what God had commanded. The leaders were also aware of it and they waited for the right time to fulfil it. All the tribes were still encamped at Shiloh. They were waiting for the completion of the division and assignment of settlement for every tribe. The command concerning the Levites was that each tribe was to give out cities and their suburbs within their heritage for the Levites' dwelling.

Everyone was aware that God, through Moses, had given a command in this regard. The tribes of Israel were twelve. The Levites were not counted because they were to serve as spiritual ministers among all the tribes. Jacob had earlier settled the question of the number of his sons when he adopted the two sons of Joseph. Ephraim, the younger son, was given the birthright; Manasseh, the elder, was also blessed. Thus, Joseph became two tribes, and Levi was replaced.

THOUGHT: God's hand was in the arrangement to settle the Levites.

PRAYER: I thank Thee, Father, that Thou always carest for Thy servants.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 21

JOSHUA 21:1-7

EXODUS 32:26-29

*“And the children of Levi did
according to the word of Moses...”*

THE PURPOSE OF SPECIAL TREATMENT OF THE LEVITES

The Levites, by virtue of their duty, were influential and given special treatment among all the tribes of Israel. They were teachers of the Law and they rendered ceremonial duties; in effect, they were also judges.

They had to interpret the Mosaic Law and guide the nation in its application. Earlier, when Jacob blessed his sons, he had condemned Levi and Simeon to be scattered among the rest of their brethren. This was because of the massacre at Shechem. However, during the time of Moses, Levi was able to redeem himself when the tribe stood for God in the golden calf episode. These events may be seen as random occurrences; and they are, as far as human perception is concerned. However, these were within God's eternal decree which He executed in His works of providence. “God's works of providence are his most holy, wise and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures, and all their actions” (Westminster Shorter Catechism Q.11). Human beings are God's moral creatures, and God deals with them in a special way. In this instance, He appointed for them leaders and prophets through whom He could communicate with. His works herein demonstrated clearly His authority and power over all His creatures. It took many generations to bring to pass His long-purposes, but they came to pass eventually.

Joshua 21:1-7 gives the list of all the cities allocated to this family. The leaders of Israel were specific in their descriptions, and their record served the purpose of giving legal possession of a particular piece of land. There was always a reflection of orderliness. The only responses in biblical record concerned requests made to the leaders by a particular tribe or family. Each request received a positive response from the leaders, and thereafter each party was satisfied. This is how God's work ought to be done.

THOUGHT: *“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above...”* (James 1:17a).

PRAYER: Father, may I always recognise that Thy gifts to me are good and perfect for me.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 22

JOSHUA 21:8-26

GALATIANS 5:19-21

*“...they which do such things
shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”*

THE LOT FOR THE FAMILY OF KOHATH

In the house of Levi, there were three main families according to the sons of the father of the tribe. They were Kohath, Gershon and Merari. They were given cities according to their number.

The family of Kohath was the first and seemed to have been larger than the other two. This was shown by the number of cities allocated to them. First, they were given thirteen cities within the heritage of Judah, Simeon and Benjamin. They received another ten cities from the heritage allocated to Ephraim, Dan and the half-tribe of Manasseh, making a total of twenty-three. This was nearly half the number given to the whole tribe. The cities allocated to them included Hebron in Judah (one of the six cities of refuge) and Shechem, in the heritage of Ephraim, also a city of refuge.

It will be observed in the end that all the six cities of refuge were given to the Levites. The purpose of setting aside those cities was for a special spiritual ministry. The Levites were qualified to handle matters that required just judgment and obedience to the Law of Moses. Aaron and Moses also came from the tribe of Levi, specifically the house of Kohath. Aaron was anointed as the first priest, and his family had to follow in his steps.

At the time of this narrative, Eleazar, the son of Aaron, was at the helm of what became the office of the high priest. This office turned out to be an important office in the subsequent history of Israel. Even though God later gave them kings as their leaders, the office of a priest remained an important office which outlived that of the kings.

The house of Kohath played a big role at the time, and God saw to it that they had sufficient dwelling places in the cities allocated to them.

THOUGHT: God's order for His servants facilitates efficient fulfilment of His given duties.

PRAYER: Father, give me contentment in whatever area of service Thou hast assigned me.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 23

JOSHUA 21:27-45

HEBREWS 4:1-11

*“Let us labour therefore
to enter into that rest...”*

THE LOT OF THE FAMILIES OF GERSHON AND MERARI

Gershon was the eldest son of Levi (Exod 6:16), and the father of the Gershonites. In the current narrative, he was overshadowed by his second brother, Kohath. He had two sons, Libni and Shimei. The family of Gershon received cities to dwell in within the heritages of Issachar, Asher, Naphtali and the half-tribe of Manasseh. The cities allocated to the Gershonites were thirteen. These included two cities of refuge: Golan and Kedesh.

Merari was the third son of Levi. The family received the allocation of cities to dwell within the heritages of the tribes of Reuben, Gad and Zebulun. The number of cities allocated to them was twelve. This was the lowest number of the three families. However, the leaders were considerate of the need of each tribe and also the quality of the cities assigned. Some may have been larger cities and some smaller. Their cities included Ramoth (in Gilead in the land of Gad) and Bezer, in the heritage of Reuben. Both cities were among the six cities of refuge. Each of the families of the Levites received two cities of refuge and all were evenly located so that they would serve the purpose for which they were assigned.

All the cities that were allocated to the Levites were forty-eight, and all were evenly distributed among the twelve tribes of Israel. It was wisdom and direction from God that guided the leaders in settling everyone satisfactorily. Joshua and Eleazar were now winding up that huge responsibility as the hand of their Lord was upon them.

In the epilogue of the account of the distribution of heritage for all the tribes, it was emphasised that God fulfilled His promise (Josh 21:43-45). God gave rest to Israel and nothing failed of all that He had promised (Gen 13:15). The long journey came to a conclusion, and Israel had rest. What rest would you have after your present pilgrimage on this earth?

THOUGHT: Heaven is the future home that believers long for, for eternal rest; and is the place Christ had promised to go and prepare for us.

PRAYER: Father, count me among the heirs of heavenly heritage.

LORD'S DAY, DECEMBER 24

JOSHUA 22

DEUTERONOMY 6:1-9

*"That thou mightest fear the LORD
thy God, to keep all his statutes..."*

UNITY IN CHRIST

The Promised Land was conquered and divided by lot. Israel as a nation had been formed. The tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh kept their word to assist the 9½ tribes in conquering Cis-Jordan. Moses permitted them to return home to their families in Trans-Jordan.

Before they crossed the River Jordan, they built an altar to remind them of their unity with the 9½ tribes. This unity was for the sake of their sons and daughters so that they all worshipped the same LORD, the living and true God of Israel. They did not want the 9½ tribes to prevent them from crossing the Jordan to worship the LORD. They also did not want their sons and daughters to forget the LORD and feel they were not part of the 9½ tribes. Israel's unity was essential to them. Joshua 22:24-25: *"And if we have not rather done it for fear of this thing, saying, In time to come your children might speak unto our children, saying, What have ye to do with the LORD God of Israel? For the LORD hath made Jordan a border between us and you, ye children of Reuben and children of Gad; ye have no part in the LORD: so shall your children make our children cease from fearing the LORD."* They probably understood this vital truth after nearly 6 to 7 years of fighting side by side against the Canaanites. The unity they experienced in doing God's work and fighting the good fight of faith was priceless.

Unity amongst like-minded believers must be fundamental to every believer. Without unity, the worship, witness, and service to the Lord would be severely compromised. The unity is not social, political or racial. It is spiritual. It is a unity based on Christ's salvific work in every believer's life. God's children must protect and do whatever it takes to maintain the unity Christ has given to them, especially those who are members of the same local church!

THOUGHT: How good and pleasant is it to me to dwell in unity?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help me always to be one with my brethren for Jesus' sake.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 25

JOSHUA 22:1-9

DEUTERONOMY 28:1-8

“The LORD shall command the blessing upon thee in thy storehouses...”

THE EASTERN TRIBES GIVEN SPOILS

The keeping of the commandments was important for all the tribes, as God had told Joshua at the beginning of his leadership. The book of the Law shall not depart from his mouth (Josh 1:8). All Israel were well instructed in the Law and were to uphold it through obedience. Thus, in their present transition, Joshua stressed the way forward. It was all important at the new beginning to recall what was needful.

Thereafter, Joshua sent them away to their tents in their heritage. He also blessed the half-tribe of Manasseh. When Israel fought with the Canaanites, they had taken possession of their goods as spoils of war. These are thus listed in Joshua 22:8 as Joshua offered the spoils to them: *“And he spake unto them, saying, Return with much riches unto your tents, and with very much cattle, with silver, and with gold, and with brass, and with iron, and with very much raiment: divide the spoil of your enemies with your brethren.”* The tribes followed Joshua's instructions and returned to their possession east of Jordan. The riches offered to them were needful as they settled in the new land. The ethical questions associated with this possession were settled because all they did was by the instructions of God. Below is an apt comment by Matthew Henry:

Joshua dismisses the tribes with good counsel. Those who have the commandment have it in vain, unless they do the commandment; and it will not be done aright unless we take diligent heed. In particular to love the Lord our God, as the best of beings, and the best of friends; and as far as that principle rules in the heart, there will be constant care and endeavour to walk in his ways, even those that are narrow and uphill. In every instance to keep his commandments. At all times, and in all conditions, with purpose of heart to cleave unto the Lord, and to serve him and his kingdom among men, with all our heart, and with all our soul. This good counsel is given to all; may God give us grace to take it!

THOUGHT: When God assigns a duty, He also gives the means.

PRAYER: Father, may I be obedient to all Thy instructions for my life and the tasks you have for me.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 26

JOSHUA 22:10-34

DEUTERONOMY 28:8-14

*“And thou shalt not go aside
from any of the words which
I command thee this day....”*

THE EASTERN TRIBES BUILT AN ALTAR BY JORDAN

The eastern tribes had good intentions in building the altar, a great monument. They conferred among themselves and agreed to erect it as a memorial because they were one with all the tribes of Israel. This altar was not for sacrifices or burnt offerings.

Their work was reported to the other tribes and, without making further inquiry, those other tribes concluded that the act was a rebellion against God. As such, they considered the eastern tribes worthy of punishment by death. They cited the previous incidents where some of Israel had rebelled and were punished. They needed to obey God. If indeed the act of the eastern tribes was a rebellion, the other tribes would have been justified in their action.

The eastern tribes explained the purpose of the altar. They told the other tribes that their altar was not for any offering or any form of worship. They asserted that it was a memorial for the future generations, so that their children might not say to them that they had no part in God. It was thus a symbol of their relationship, since their heritage was to the east of Jordan. They affirmed that they were not rebelling against God. The other tribes were pleased with the explanation of the purpose of the altar. Phinehas the priest certified that they had not committed a trespass. He told them that he perceived that God was among them. They returned to their tents fully satisfied. They called the altar Ed (Josh 22:34), i.e. a witness between them and God. The peace of God ruled among them so that they lived in harmony.

The episode revealed how careful Israel was at that time to obey God and to remember all that He had done for them. They stressed the need of separation from sin. This is still a lesson for us believers today. We must not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. Let us watch and pray.

THOUGHT: All the commandments of God have superlative expressions.

PRAYER: Father, may Thou grant me the grace to recognise and resist the temptation of sin.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 27

JOSHUA 23

PROVERBS 16:1-9

*“Commit thy works unto the LORD,
and thy thoughts shall be established.”*

JOSHUA PREPARED TO DEPART

When Joshua had completed sub-dividing the land to the tribes, he lived in Canaan in a time of peace, and continued to lead the nation of Israel.

Some years had passed since Israel settled in the land of Canaan. Joshua was old and ready to depart. He knew that his days were coming to an end, so he prepared the nation. It was prudent and logical for him to have a last word with Israel. He called the top leaders to charge them.

It is noted here that Joshua was ever consistent. He told Israel to be courageous and that the key to their success was obedience to the Law of Moses. He reminded them of what God had done for them. His main charge was that Israel must hold on to the Law of Moses. He warned against any relationship with the remaining Canaanites, stressing the need to keep off the idolatry of the Canaanites. He assured them of God's faithfulness as he reminded them of what God had already done for them. This was a confirmation that all the promises of God would be fulfilled. God had shown His power in driving out those nations. Joshua used this to show Israel that God would continue to fight for them. They were thus to rest contented and to seek the mind of God in all that they do. The Law must be their point of reference. There were also the priests and Levites to guide them. Joshua spoke strongly because the temptation to compromise the commandments of God was ever present. He also recalled what Moses had told Israel before his departure and the direct charge that God had given him when he assumed the leadership of the nation. He told them that there would be spiritually fatal consequences when they reject God. The testimony of Joshua spoke for itself and his words were weighty.

At the time of his death, Joshua was one-hundred-and-ten years old.

THOUGHT: Transition in spiritual leadership ushers in a hopeful future.

PRAYER: Father, give me ears to hear the words of wise and spiritually sound leaders.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 28

JOSHUA 23

DEUTERONOMY 6:4-14

*“Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God,
and serve him...”*

THE WARNING AGAINST THE REMAINING CANAANITES

God would fight for Israel. One of them would chase a thousand. In this regard, their love for God was foremost. What has come to be called the greatest commandment is thus recorded in Deuteronomy 6:4-14. This, according to Jesus, is the sum of all the commandments. Israel was thus forbidden to make marriages with the Canaanites. This prohibition was also repeated in the Law. Such an affinity with the Canaanites would lead them to compromise the sanctity of their standing before God. Joshua warned them of the consequence if they disobeyed: *“Know for a certainty that the LORD your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before you...”* (Josh 23:13). It pays to heed God’s warning at all times and live.

Israel had assurance of God’s faithfulness. Joshua was about to depart and his final words were important to Israel. He reminded the nation again of God’s faithfulness and that God would always remain their hope. He told them that God would fulfil His promises for or against Israel depending on how they stood before Him. They were strictly forbidden to worship other gods, and if they did, God’s anger would be against them. The difference between Israel and the Canaanites was their belief and worship. The Canaanites held to idols and worshipped them. Israel knew the true God and Creator. He alone is to be worshipped.

Joshua repeated what Israel knew of God, and he stressed this lest they forget. Holiness is foremost for all God’s children. Let us be holy for our God is holy.

In equal measure, the church today must take a stand never to compromise the Word of God. The need for the church to be separate from the world is ever urgent. Any compromise with false religions is forbidden and believers are to be cautious in these days of ecumenical approach that leads to syncretism. Never water down the exclusive nature of the Gospel for unity at the expense of the truth.

THOUGHT: Biblical principles are the mainstays of faith.

PRAYER: Father, may I remain faithful to Thy doctrinal truths.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 29
JOSHUA 24
DEUTERONOMY 6:4-14

*“...fear the LORD thy God,
to walk in all his ways...”*

JOSHUA CONVENED HIS LAST ASSEMBLY

A covenant is a binding agreement in which God is a witness. Every party to it is responsible to God. Joshua renewed the covenant between Israel and God as the day of his departure approached. He gathered the nation at Shechem and gave a solemn charge urging them to remain faithful to God. He wrote those words in the book of the law of God. He also set up a great stone for a witness.

Joshua might have chosen Shechem because it was nearest to his inheritance. He was old and it was better for Israel to come to him than for him to go to them. He was no stranger to dealing with large gatherings. He had been a leader of the nation for a long time and was skilled in effective communication. He wanted to deliver an important message, and this was his last word to the nation. He began his address with *“Thus saith the LORD God of Israel...”* (Josh 24:2). Even in this last communication, he spoke with the authority that he was conveying a message from God. He reviewed how God had dealt with the nation from the time of Abraham up to their settlement in the land of Canaan. He mentioned some of the problems that they had faced during the Exodus and how God had helped them to overcome all their obstacles.

God spoke directly to the nation through Joshua. He recalled the scheme of Balak, king of Moab, who, in order to prevent Israel from occupying their land, hired Balaam to curse Israel, and how God did not allow it. He spoke of the conquest of Jericho, their first city in Canaan. God added that He had sent the hornets before them which drove away the kings of the Amorites, not with a sword or bow. He gave Israel land that they did not labour for, cities that they did not build, vineyards and oliveyards which they did not plant and of which they ate from. It was estimated that it had taken Joshua seven years to fight and to drive out the Canaanites and also to subdivide the land among all the tribes of Israel. It is not that they were not able to capture the land immediately, but there were administrative logistics that they had to overcome.

THOUGHT: Testify of God’s great works in your life.

PRAYER: Father, may I never forget what Thou hast done for me.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 30

JOSHUA 24

DEUTERONOMY 6:4-14

*“...learn to fear the LORD,
thy God always.”*

JOSHUA SPOKE OF THE SUM OF HIS SERVICE

It was now time to recount the sum of what God had done through Joshua. Joshua told Israel to fear God and serve Him sincerely by putting away the false gods and serving God only. He spoke of all those wonders to remind Israel lest they forget. He conveyed this message from God as his final communication to the nation. It was a great blessing to be used of God in the prime of his life. Joshua desired lasting results. This was in his heart when he convened that assembly.

Joshua, being an old man, spoke and addressed a new generation. He had enough experience of human weakness in following God and he knew how easy it was for the nation to leave God to serve other gods. Thus, he summoned all his energy to bring the message home to that assembly. Joshua was not formally a prophet, but he did the work of a prophet because he conveyed the message of God to Israel.

Joshua urged the nation to serve God with sincerity, not with lip service. The people, who came out of Egypt and had experienced crossing the Red Sea on its dried sea bed, would react differently from those who simply heard about it. They were hesitant, but they saw the salvation of God. Joshua had witnessed all those wonders of the Exodus, thus when he spoke of sincerity, he himself was sincere. He stated his own commitment to serve God. When he said this, the whole assembly of Israel was of one accord. They pledged before Joshua that they would not forsake God or serve other gods. They pledged to serve God only. The main reason it was abominable to serve other gods was that it would be a denial of God who had brought them out of Egypt. It was also prohibited in the first commandment. It was thus part of their confession to believe in the true God, commonly referred to as the God of Israel. They acknowledged that it was God who had brought them out with a mighty hand and had done wonders all the way until they were settled in Canaan.

THOUGHT: (Read Exodus 20:3.)

PRAYER: Father, may my sincerity in serving Thee stand to the end.

LORD'S DAY, DECEMBER 31

JOSHUA 24

DEUTERONOMY 6:4-14

*"...learn to fear the LORD his God,
to keep all the words of this law..."*

JOSHUA'S FINAL WARNING TO ISRAEL

It was natural for Joshua to give a warning in his circumstances. There were many people and the temptation to draw away was always with them. He emphasised the holiness of God and their vulnerability to defile themselves. He warned them that as unholy people, they could not serve God because He was holy and was a jealous God. He added that if they forsook God, He would consume them.

In this warning, Joshua was testing their readiness and he painted the possibility of them forsaking God. The people again repeated their pledge that they would serve God. In all this questioning, Joshua was laying stress on the importance of what he was telling Israel. He wanted to establish a faithful legacy so that God would continue to accomplish all His promises to Israel. He then asked them to put away the strange gods which were among them. This was an acknowledgement that there were some among them who had strange gods. The elderly leader was cautious of this, thus he urged them to come clean on this matter. The people repeatedly affirmed before Joshua that they were going to serve God and obey His voice. Joshua urged them yet again and they made a covenant in Shechem. It was in this city that God had met with Abraham and he had built an altar to God. It was here also that the bones of Joseph were buried. Jacob dug a well of water in Shechem that bore his name to this day. It was by the same well that Jesus met the woman of Samaria and preached to her about salvation (John 4:12).

Joshua kept the words of the covenant for posterity: he wrote those words in the book of the Law of God. It was after this that Joshua dismissed the assembly. This being his last public activity, it carried great importance. He kept a permanent record in writing. The setting up of a stone was also a witness that generations could see and confirm all these words of the LORD. The people heard the words of Joshua, and thereafter they departed. Joshua died at the age of a hundred and ten. The elders who outlived Joshua kept their pledge and served God as they had promised. Thus, the illustrious era of Joshua came to an end.

THOUGHT: The record of Joshua's life showed no blemish on him.

PRAYER: Father, grant me grace that I may serve Thee as Joshua served.