

Now we read about a very disturbing incident – **Joshua 7** – the sin of **Achan**.

After the success of Jericho, the next city should have been a 'walk over' – but no.

(Jos 7:2) And Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is beside Beth-aven, on the east side of Bethel. And he spoke to them, saying, Go up and look over the country. And the men went up and spied out Ai.

(Jos 7:3) And they returned to Joshua and said to him, Let not all the people go up. But let about two or three thousand men go up and strike Ai. Do not make all the people labor there, for they are few.

(Jos 7:4) And about three thousand men of the people went up there. And they fled before the men of Ai.

(Jos 7:5) And the men of Ai struck about thirty-six men of them, for they chased them from before the gate to Shebarim, and struck them in the road going down. Therefore the hearts of the people melted and became as water.

(Jos 7:6) And Joshua tore his clothes and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of Jehovah until the eventide, he and the elders of Israel, and put dust on their heads.

The Situation (Joshua 7)

- God had commanded that **Jericho be devoted to destruction** — no one was allowed to take plunder.
- **Achan secretly took** silver, gold, and a robe and hid them **in his tent**.
- Because of this, Israel was **defeated at Ai**, and soldiers died.
- God said: "*Israel has sinned.*" Not just Achan — the sin was treated as **corporate**.
- After Achan was identified, **he, his sons, his daughters, his livestock, and all he had** were destroyed.

? Why Was His Family Punished Too?

Scholars usually explain this with **three main reasons** (which can overlap):

1 The Family Was Likely Complicit

The stolen items were: "hidden in the ground inside his tent, with the silver underneath" (Josh 7:21)

In a small family tent:

- It's **very unlikely** his family didn't know.

- They probably:
 - Helped hide it
 - Or at least **knew and kept silent**

Under the Law of Moses, **participating in or concealing sin** made you guilty too.

2 Israel Is Treated as a Covenant Community

God says:

"Israel has sinned" (Joshua 7:11)

In the Old Testament:

- The nation is seen as a **corporate body**
- One person's sin can bring **consequences on many** (like Adam, or David's census)

Achan's sin:

- Caused **military defeat**
- Led to **the deaths of innocent soldiers**
- Brought God's presence and protection to **withdraw from the whole camp**

So the punishment is not just about one man's private wrongdoing — it's about **treachery inside a holy community during holy war**.

3 This Was an Act of High Treason Against God

Jericho was:

- The **first city** in the conquest
- Completely devoted to God (herem — "the ban")

Taking from it was like:

- Stealing from **God's treasury**
- Breaking a **direct, explicit command**
- Endangering the **entire mission**

In biblical terms, this is closer to **sacrilege + treason**, not petty theft.

But Didn't God Say Children Shouldn't Be Punished for Their Parents' Sins?

Yes:

“Children shall not be put to death for their fathers” (Deut 24:16)

Two important clarifications:

- That law applies to **human courts**
- It does **not** forbid God, as judge of all, from:
 - Judging families or nations corporately
 - Especially when there is **shared guilt or shared benefit**

Also, later passages (like Ezekiel 18) emphasize **individual responsibility**, showing a development and clarification in how justice is taught to Israel.

Theological Purpose of the Story

This event happens **at the very beginning** of the conquest to teach:

- God is **not to be treated lightly**
- Hidden sin can **destroy a whole community**
- Victory depends on **holiness, not just military strength**
- God’s presence is what wins battles — and **sin drives it away**

A New Testament Parallel

In **Acts 5**, Ananias and Sapphira:

- Lie to God about money
- Both die
- For the same reason: **protecting the holiness of God’s people at a critical moment**

In Short

Achan’s family was likely punished because they were **involved or complicit**, and because this was a case of **covenant treason** that endangered the entire nation at a critical moment in Israel’s history.

Chapter 8

Destruction of Ai – 8:1-29

Joshua followed the Lord’s battle plan and defeated Ai – raising it to the ground.

Renewal of the Covenant - 8:30-35

Chapter 9 – the art of deception.

READ.

Why was Joshua deceived? 9:14

Identify the fulfillment of Genesis

(Gen 9:25) And he said, Cursed be Canaan. He shall be a servant of servants to his brothers.

(Gen 9:26) And he said, Blessed be Jehovah, the God of Shem, and Canaan shall be his servant.

1. What Happens in Joshua 9?

After Israel defeats Jericho and Ai:

- The **Gibeonites**, a Canaanite people, become afraid.
- God had commanded Israel to **destroy the Canaanite nations** in the land.
- So the Gibeonites use **deception**:
 - They wear old clothes
 - Carry moldy bread
 - Pretend they come from a faraway country
- They ask Israel to make a **peace treaty** with them.

! Israel's Mistake

"They did not ask counsel from the LORD." (Joshua 9:14)

- Israel believes them.
- They **swear an oath before God** to spare them.
- Three days later, Israel discovers they were **neighbors**, not foreigners.

What Can Israel Do?

- They **cannot break the oath** because it was sworn in God's name.
- But the Gibeonites are punished:

They become **woodcutters and water carriers for the house of God** (Joshua 9:27)

So:

- They are **not killed**
- But they are placed under **permanent servitude**

2. What Does Genesis 9:25 Say?

After Noah's flood, he pronounces a prophecy/curse:

"Cursed be **Canaan**;
a **servant of servants** shall he be to his brothers."

This is not a curse on all Ham's descendants — specifically **on Canaan**, whose descendants become the **Canaanite peoples**.

3. The Connection Between Genesis 9 and Joshua 9

The **Gibeonites are Canaanites** (Joshua 9:7).

So in Joshua 9:

- They are **not destroyed**
- But they are:

Made **permanent servants** in Israel

This fulfills, in a very literal way:

"A servant of servants shall he be..."

They become:

- Lowest-status laborers
- Assigned to the sanctuary
- In lifelong servitude to Israel

So **Joshua 9 is a historical outworking of Genesis 9:25**.

May Canaan be his servant: In earlier generations, prejudiced

4. But Why Does God Allow Them to Live?

Interestingly:

- The Gibeonites:
 - **Believe Israel's God is real**
 - **Fear Him**
 - Take action to **save their lives**

Even though they lie, they:

- Acknowledge God's power
- Seek refuge among God's people (like Rahab did, but less honestly)

God:

- Allows them to live
- But still fulfills the judgment on Canaan through **subjugation**

So you see **both mercy and judgment**.

5. Theological Themes

A) God Keeps His Word Across Centuries

- Genesis 9 → Joshua 9 (hundreds of years later)
- God's prophetic word about Canaan **comes true in history**

B) Oaths Before God Are Serious

- Even when made foolishly
- Even when made because of deception
- God **holds Israel to it**

C) Judgment Can Include Servitude, Not Only Death

- The curse is not only destruction
- It is **humbling and subjugation**

Big Picture Summary

In Genesis 9:25, God declares that Canaan's descendants will become servants.

In Joshua 9, the Gibeonites (Canaanites) escape destruction but are made **permanent servants**, fulfilling that ancient word while also showing God's mercy and Israel's responsibility to honor their oath.

Important Clarification

This passage:

- Is **not** about race
- Is **not** about all Ham's descendants
- Is **specifically about the Canaanite nations** in the land

The Bible itself limits the curse to **Canaan**, not humanity in general. **May Canaan be his servant**: In earlier generations, prejudiced people regarded the descendants of Canaan as black people from Africa, and they used the curse on Canaan to justify slavery. But black people did not come from Canaan. Canaan was the father of the near-eastern peoples, many of whom were conquered by Joshua when Israel took the Promised Land.

Joshua 10 is a **major turning point** in the conquest narrative and an amazing miracle that shows God publicly fighting for Israel and establishes Israel's dominance in the south of Canaan.

This is the way it is recorded,

JOS 10:9 After an all-night march from Gilgal, Joshua took them [the Amorites] by surprise. ¹⁰ The LORD threw them into confusion before Israel, who defeated them in a great victory at Gibeon. Israel pursued them along the road going up to Beth Horon and cut them down all the way to Azekah and Makkedah. ¹¹ As they fled before Israel on the road down from Beth Horon to Azekah, the LORD hurled large hailstones down on them from the sky, and more of them died from the hailstones than were killed by the swords of the Israelites.

JOS 10:12 On the day the LORD gave the Amorites over to Israel, Joshua said to the LORD in the presence of Israel:

*"O sun, stand still over Gibeon,
O moon, over the Valley of Aijalon."*

*JOS 10:13 So the sun stood still,
and the moon stopped,*

till the nation avenged itself onⁿ its enemies, as it is written in the Book of Jashar.

*The sun stopped in the middle of the sky and delayed going down about a full day. ¹⁴ There has never been a day like it before or since, a day when the LORD listened to a man. **Surely the LORD was fighting for Israel!***

1. The Setup: Five Kings Attack Gibeon

Because of Joshua 9:

- Gibeon has made a treaty with Israel.
- This is seen as **treason** by the surrounding Canaanite kings.
- **Five Amorite kings** form a coalition to attack Gibeon:
 - Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, Eglon

Gibeon sends an urgent message to Joshua:

"Do not abandon your servants... come quickly and save us!"

Joshua honors the treaty and marches **all night** from Gilgal.

2. God Promises Victory

Before the battle:

"Do not fear them, for I have given them into your hands." (Josh 10:8)

So:

- This is **God's war**, not just Israel's.
- The outcome is already decided.

3. God Fights for Israel

During the battle:

- The enemy panics.
- As they flee:
 - **God sends massive hailstones**
 - More die from hail than from Israel's swords.

This is a key theme:

God is the primary warrior; Israel is His instrument.

4. The Sun Stands Still

Joshua prays publicly:

"Sun, stand still over Gibeon, and moon, over the Valley of Aijalon."

And the text says:

"The sun stood still... until the nation took vengeance on their enemies."

Important points:

- The text presents this as a **miraculous divine intervention**.
- The point is not to teach astronomy, but theology:

God controls time and nature to fulfill His promises.

- Scripture says:

"There has been no day like it before or since, when the LORD listened to a human being."

5. The Five Kings Are Judged

- The five kings hide in a cave.
- Joshua:
 - Has the cave sealed
 - Finishes the battle
 - Then brings them out

He makes a public example:

- Puts his commanders' feet on their necks (symbol of total defeat)
- Encourages the people:

"Do not be afraid... the LORD will do this to all your enemies."

Then:

- The kings are executed.
- Their bodies are displayed until evening and buried in the cave.

6. The Southern Campaign Summary

The rest of the chapter lists:

- A rapid campaign conquering:
 - Makkedah, Libnah, Lachish, Gezer, Eglon, Hebron, Debir
- The summary statement:

"Joshua struck all the land... and left none remaining."

This is **victory language** common in ancient warfare accounts, emphasizing **decisive dominance**.

Theological Themes of Joshua 10

1 God Fights for His People

- Hailstones
- Extended daylight
- Panic in the enemy ranks

Victory is **supernatural**, not just military.

2 God Keeps His Promises

- He promised Abraham the land.
- He promised Joshua success.
- Joshua 10 shows God **publicly fulfilling that promise**.

3 God Honors Faithful Obedience

- Joshua keeps his oath to Gibeon even though it cost him.
- God **blesses that faithfulness**.

4 God's Sovereignty Over Creation

- Sun and moon imagery shows:

Nature itself obeys the Creator in service of His purposes.

About the "Sun Standing Still"

Christians interpret this in different ways:

- A literal cosmic miracle
- Or a phenomenological description (from human perspective)
- Or poetic language using ancient battle-song imagery (note the reference to the "Book of Jashar")

But **the text's main point** is:

God intervened in an unprecedented way to guarantee total victory.

Big Picture Summary

Joshua 10 shows God stepping into history as a warrior, using nature, time, and terror to give Israel overwhelming victory, proving that the conquest is God's work, not Israel's.

Regarding the miracle of the earth stopping on its axis, one must not lose sight of something I mentioned before, Israel is God's son and here we see God's son, Israel, takes the land.

[Jesus God's Son in his own right – in relation to the Father – he is unique – we are sons by virtue of the work of Christ – adopted sons].

Israel' God's son is exercising dominion over the creation in fulfillment of the function of the image of God.

This is dramatically shown in another passage that describes Israel's conquest of five Canaanite kings and their armies.

After defeating their armies, Joshua makes the leaders lie prostrate on the ground.

He then commands Israelite leaders to place their feet on the necks of the enemy, indicating dominion

Joshua 10

(Jos 10:24) And when they brought those kings out to Joshua, Joshua summoned all the men of Israel and said to the chiefs of the men of war who had gone with him, "Come near; put your feet on the necks of these kings." Then they came near and put their feet on their necks.

(Jos 10:25) And Joshua said to them, "Do not be afraid or dismayed; be strong and courageous. For thus the LORD will do to all your enemies against whom you fight."

(Jos 10:26) And afterward Joshua struck them and put them to death, and he hanged them on five trees. And they hung on the trees until evening.

There are obvious echoes of the seed of the woman crushing the serpent's head and placing of the curse upon the seed of the serpent.

The hanging of the bodies on trees graphically shows the cursed fate of these kings – the curse upon Ham before the Table of Nations is working itself out on his son, Canaan.

This is what we read in **chapter 11**,

²³ So Joshua took the entire land, just as the LORD had directed Moses, and he gave it as an inheritance to Israel according to their tribal divisions.

Then the land had **rest** from war.

Viewing this verse and the statement concerning REST from a Redemptive history perspective, we need to go to Hebrews 3 and 4 which interprets the conquest.

The writer warns the Hebrew believers of the terrible danger of going back to the Old Covenant and he uses the history of Israel as a warning.

(Heb 3:7) Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, "Today if you will hear His voice,

(Heb 3:8) do not harden your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness,

(Heb 3:9) when your fathers tempted Me, proved Me, and saw My works forty years.

(Heb 3:10) Therefore I was grieved with that generation and said, They always err in their heart, and they have not known My ways.

(Heb 3:11) So I swore in My wrath, They shall not enter into My rest."

(Heb 3:12) Take heed, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.

(Heb 3:13) But exhort one another daily, while it is called today, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

(Heb 3:14) For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end,

(Heb 3:15) while it is said, "Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation."

(Heb 3:16) For some, when they had heard, did provoke; however, not all who came out of Egypt by Moses.

(Heb 3:17) But with whom was He grieved forty years? Was it not with

those who had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?

(Heb 3:18) And to whom did He swear that they should not enter into His rest, but to those who did not believe?

(Heb 3:19) So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

(Heb 4:1) Therefore, a promise being left to enter into His rest, let us fear lest any of you should seem to come short of it.

(Heb 4:2) For also we have had the gospel preached, as well as them. But the Word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.

(Heb 4:3) For we who have believed do enter into the rest, as He said, "I have sworn in My wrath that they should not enter into My rest;" although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.

(Heb 4:4) For He spoke in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: "And God rested the seventh day from all His works."

(Heb 4:5) And in this place again, "They shall not enter into My rest."

(Heb 4:6) Since then it remains that some must enter into it, and since they to whom it was first preached did not enter in because of unbelief,

(Heb 4:7) He again marks out a certain day, saying in David, "Today," (after so long a time). Even as it is said, "Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts."

(Heb 4:8) For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day.

(Heb 4:9) So then there remains a rest to the people of God.

(Heb 4:10) For he who has entered into his rest, he also has ceased from his own works, as God did from His.

(Heb 4:11) Therefore let us labor to enter into that rest, lest anyone fall after the same example of unbelief.

(Heb 4:12) For the Word of God is living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing apart of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

(Heb 4:13) Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight, but all things are naked and opened to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

(Heb 4:14) Since then we have a great High Priest who has passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.

(Heb 4:15) For we do not have a high priest who cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted just as we are, yet without sin.

(Heb 4:16) Therefore let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

These verses in Hebrews highlight the spiritual significance of rest that goes beyond the physical inheritance of the promised land.

The promised land symbolised entry into Eden-like rest and prosperity, contrasting with the hardship of Egypt. Despite this, Joshua was unable to lead Israel fully into these blessings.

The promised land represented a return to Eden's rest and prosperity, yet even Joshua did not lead Israel into those blessings.

In chapter 12 we have a list of the cities and kings they had conquered.

The conquest itself is depicted as a fulfillment of the promise that God made to Abraham of the possession of the land.

Chapter 13 – unconquered land – a disturbing note.

(Jos 13:1) Now Joshua was old, going on in days. And Jehovah said to him, You are old, far along in days, and there remains yet very much land to be possessed.

(Jos 13:2) This is the land that still remains: all the borders of the Philistines, and all Geshuri,

(Jos 13:3) from Shihor, which is before Egypt, even to the borders of Ekron northward, which is counted to the Canaanite, five lords of the Philistines: of Gaza, of Ashdod, of Ashkelon, of Gath, and of Ekron; also the Avim.

God promises to enable them to drive out these peoples so that they could take full possession of the land.

(Jos 13:6) ... all the inhabitants from the hills; from Lebanon to the Burning Waters, and all the Sidonians; I will expel them before the sons of Israel. Only you divide it by lot to the Israelites for an inheritance, as I have commanded you.

(Jos 13:7) And, therefore, divide this land for an inheritance to the nine tribes and the half tribe of Manasseh,

(Jos 13:8) with whom the Reubenites and the Gadites have received their inheritance which Moses gave them beyond Jordan eastward, as Moses the servant of Jehovah gave them,

Now, it is easy to miss out verse 13 and the reference to the Gershurites.

However, this is an example of those who were not driven out and it resulted in some serious consequences.

(Jos 13:13) But the sons of Israel did not put out the Geshurites and the Maachathites, but the Geshurites and the Maachathites dwell among the Israelites until this day.

The **Geshurites** are a small but **theologically and historically important** detail in the Bible because they represent a pattern you see throughout Judges–Kings: **unfinished obedience and its long-term consequences**.

Let's look at who they were and why it matters that Israel did not drive them out.

1. Who Were the Geshurites?

There are actually **two groups** called Geshurites in the Old Testament:

A) Southern Geshurites (Joshua period)

Mentioned in:

Joshua 13:2–3

They lived in the **southwest**, near Philistine territory.

These are among the peoples:

“that remain” and were **not driven out** by Israel.

B) Northern Geshur (near Bashan / Aram)

Mentioned later in:

2 Samuel 3:3, 13:37

This is a **small Aramean kingdom** north of Israel, near Bashan.

This second group becomes politically important in David's time.

2. Why Is It Significant They Were Not Expelled?

God had commanded:

The Canaanite peoples were to be driven out, not tolerated (Deut 7:1–5; Josh 1:1–6).

But Joshua 13 says:

“There remains yet very much land to possess.”

The Geshurites are listed as an example of:

Incomplete conquest

This becomes a **major theme** in Judges:

- Israel settles down
- Stops finishing the job
- Begins to **coexist with pagan neighbors**
- Which leads to:
 - Idolatry
 - Political compromise
 - Moral decline

3. The Long-Term Consequences: David and Absalom

Here's where it gets really interesting.

David marries:

Maacah, daughter of Talmai king of Geshur (2 Sam 3:3)

She is the mother of:

Absalom

When Absalom kills his brother Amnon, he:

Flees to Geshur for three years (2 Sam 13:37)

So:

- An **unconquered pagan enclave**
- Becomes:
 - A **political refuge**
 - A **power base**
 - For the man who will later **nearly destroy David's kingdom**

In other words:

A failure to fully obey God in Joshua's time echoes into a **national crisis generations later**.

4. Theological Meaning

A) Compromise Always Has Delayed Costs

The Geshurites seemed:

- Militarily insignificant
- Politically harmless

But they became:

- A **spiritual and political foothold**
- That later produced **civil war**

B) God's Commands Were About Protection, Not Cruelty

These peoples were not just "other nations":

- They represented:
 - Idolatry
 - Corrupt worship
 - Destructive moral systems

Leaving them in the land meant:

Israel would eventually be influenced by what God wanted them protected from.

C) Small Disobediences Become Big Problems

Joshua 13 sounds like a footnote.

2 Samuel shows it was **not**.

5. Pattern Elsewhere in Scripture

Same story with:

- Philistines
- Jebusites in Jerusalem
- Various Canaanite enclaves

Each becomes:

A thorn, a snare, or a future enemy

Exactly as God warned in:

Judges 2:1–3

The Geshurites matter because they are a living example of how **unfinished obedience in Joshua's time became a major political and spiritual crisis in David's time**, showing that compromise with what God says to remove always has long-term consequences.

There is another reference in chapter 13 that we must not overlook - (*Jos 13:22*) *The sons of Israel also killed Balaam the son of Beor, the diviner, with the sword, among their slain.*

You will remember that he was the one whom the king asked to curse Israel, the one with the clever donkey.

In Chapters 14 through 22, the twelve tribes each receive their share of the land – this is not just “administrative land division.”

It is the **theological heart of the book**, showing how God **keeps His promises** and how Israel must **live faithfully inside those promises**.

1. What Happens in Joshua 14–22?

These chapters describe:

- The **division of the Promised Land** among the tribes
- The **settling of Israel** in Canaan
- The establishment of:
 - Cities
 - Tribal borders
 - Levitical towns
 - Cities of refuge
- The return of the **eastern tribes** (Reuben, Gad, half-Manasseh) to their land

Main points:

- **14–19** → Land is allotted to the tribes
- **20** → Cities of refuge
- **21** → Levitical cities + key theological summary
- **22** → The altar crisis and reconciliation

2. The Big Theological Statement (Joshua 21:43–45)

This is the **climax statement** of the whole conquest section:

“Not one word of all the good promises that the LORD had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass.”

This confirms that

God has kept His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

3. Caleb in Joshua 14: A Living Witness

We have an interesting insight into Caleb, who, with Joshua spied out Jericho 40 years previously and encouraged the people to go in and conquer the land.

*(Jos 14:6) Then the sons of Judah came to Joshua in Gilgal. And **Caleb**, the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite, said to him, You know the thing that Jehovah said to Moses the man of God in Kadesh-barnea regarding you and me.*

(Jos 14:7) I was forty years old when Moses the servant of Jehovah sent me from Kadesh-barnea to spy out the land. And I brought him word again as it was in my heart.

(Jos 14:8) But my brothers that went up with me made the heart of the people melt; yet I fully followed Jehovah my God.

(Jos 14:9) And Moses swore on that day, saying, Surely the land on which your feet have trodden shall be your inheritance, and your sons' forever because you have fully followed Jehovah my God.

(Jos 14:10) And now, behold, Jehovah has kept me alive these forty-five years as He said, even since Jehovah spoke this word to Moses, while Israel wandered in the wilderness. And now, lo, I am eighty-five years old today.

(Jos 14:11) As yet I am as strong today as I was in the day that Moses sent me. As my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out and to come in.

(Jos 14:12) And now give me this mountain of which Jehovah spoke on that day. For you heard in that day how the giants were there, and that the cities were great and fortified. If Jehovah will be with me, then I will be able to drive them out, as Jehovah said.

(Jos 14:13) And Joshua blessed him, and gave Hebron to Caleb the son of Jephunneh for an inheritance.

(Jos 14:14) And Hebron became the inheritance of Caleb, the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite, to this day, because he fully followed Jehovah, the God of Israel.

(Jos 14:15) And the name of Hebron before was Kirjath-arba; that one was a great man among the giants. And the land had rest from war.

Despite his age, Caleb continued to trust God and was determined to claim a challenging portion of land, unlike many in Israel.

Caleb represents:

- The **faithful generation**
- Proof that trusting God leads to **inheritance**

He gets Hebron, formerly a stronghold of giants.

This shows:

The land is received by **faith**, not just force.

4. The Land Is a Gift, Not a Trophy

Repeated emphasis:

- The land is:
 - **Given by lot – not one Israelite paid for his property, it was a gift of grace an inheritance from God.**
 - Distributed under God's authority
 - Not seized by ambition or politics

(Jos 1:6) Be strong and of good courage. For you shall divide for an inheritance to this people, the land which I swore to their fathers, to give it to them.

11:23, 13:6-8, 15,

Each tribe receives the land as an inheritance.

(Jos 24:28) And Joshua sent away the people, each man to his inheritance.

This reinforces:

Israel lives in the land by **grace**, not entitlement.

Identity and Belonging

The land is more than just territory; it's the **identity** of the people. It's where:

- They will live as a **nation set apart**.
- They will worship God and live out His laws.

Calling the land an inheritance connects Israel's **national identity** to their spiritual identity as God's chosen people.

4. Stewardship and Responsibility

As an inheritance, the land comes with **responsibility**:

- Israel is to **live according to God's laws** and maintain their covenant relationship.
- They are stewards of the land, tasked with **obedience and faithfulness**.

This means the land is both a gift and a **trust**, requiring Israel to honor God and keep the covenant.

5. Rest and Shalom

The concept of inheritance also ties into the idea of **rest** (shabbat) and **peace (shalom)**:

- The land is a place of **rest** after the wilderness journey.
- It's where Israel experiences the **peace and stability** that comes from living in harmony with God's will.

In essence, the land as an inheritance symbolizes the **fulfillment of God's promise of peace and rest** for His people.

6. Typology and New Testament Fulfillment

In Christian theology, the land as an inheritance also points forward to a **greater inheritance** in Christ:

- The **heavenly inheritance** promised to believers.
- The land of Canaan serves as a **type or shadow** of the ultimate eternal inheritance that God provides.

This connection shows a continuity in God's plan, linking the Old Testament promises to the New Testament fulfillment.

In One Sentence

Calling the land an inheritance in Joshua highlights God's faithfulness, the grace of His promise, the identity and responsibility of Israel, and ultimately points toward a greater spiritual inheritance in Christ.

This matter of the land as an inheritance is relevant to the question of the land today.

The question is whether the land [Palestine still forms part of God's redemptive plan, specifically for the Jews and the end times].

¶ Let's trace the **theme of "inheritance"** across the Bible and see how Joshua fits into the bigger story of redemption.

1. Inheritance Begins with Promise, Not Possession

To Abraham (Genesis 12, 15, 17)

God promises Abraham:

- Land
 - Descendants
 - Blessing to the nations
- = KINGDOM**

Key point:

Abraham never truly owns the land — he lives as a **sojourner**.

This teaches:

The inheritance is **guaranteed by God's word**, not by human control.

So from the start, inheritance is:

- **Future-oriented**
- **Faith-based**
- **God-secured**

AND THIS IS CONFIRMED IN HEBREWS 11 WHERE IT IS STATED;

*(Heb 11:8) By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out into a place which he was afterward going to receive for **an inheritance**. And he went out, not knowing where he went.*

(Heb 11:9) By faith he lived in the land of promise as a stranger, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs of the same promise with him.

*(Heb 11:10) **For he looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.***

(Heb 11:13) These all died by way of faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off. And they were persuaded of them and embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

*(Heb 11:14) **For they who say such things declare plainly that they seek a fatherland.***

(Heb 11:15) And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from which they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.

*(Heb 11:16) **But now they stretch forth to a better fatherland, that is, a heavenly one.** Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.*

Hebrews 11:8–16 gives us the New Testament's own inspired interpretation of what the land promise ultimately meant.

1. What Hebrews Is Saying About Abraham and the Land

The text makes **five crucial claims**:

1 Abraham did go to the literal land

"He went out... to a place which he would receive as an inheritance" (v8)

So:

- The promise **was real**
- The land **was real**
- The history in Genesis and Joshua **really happened**

2 But Abraham never treated it as the final fulfillment

"He lived in the land of promise **as a stranger**, dwelling in tents..." (v9)

Even in the Promised Land:

- He lived like a **temporary resident**
- Not like someone who had reached the destination

Why?

3 Because he was looking for something greater

"For he was looking for **the city with foundations**, whose builder and maker is God." (v10)

So:

Canaan was **not the ultimate inheritance** — it was a **signpost i.e., a symbol..**

4 The patriarchs died without receiving the final form of the promise

"These all died in faith, **not having received the promises...**" (v13)

But:

- They **believed** them
- They **embraced** them
- They **confessed** they were **strangers and pilgrims on the earth**

5 The promise is redefined as a “better country”

“They desire a **better country, that is, a heavenly one**... God has prepared a city for them.” (v16)

This is explicit:

The ultimate “Promised Land” is **not earthly Canaan**, but **God’s eternal city and renewed creation**.

2. Theological Implications for the Land of Palestine / Canaan

A) The land promise was real but not final

The New Testament does **not deny** the Old Testament land promise.

But it **does say**:

The physical land was a **type, shadow, and preview** of something greater.

B) The ultimate inheritance is not a strip of land in the Middle East

According to Hebrews:

The true inheritance is **God’s eternal kingdom / city / new creation**.

This means:

- **The Bible does not present modern political control of Palestine as the final theological fulfillment of Abraham’s hope.**
- Abraham himself was looking **beyond** Canaan.

C) The promise expands, not shrinks

Paul says:

The promise to Abraham was that he would inherit **the world**, not just Canaan (Romans 4:13)

Jesus says:

“The meek shall inherit **the earth**” (Matt 5:5)

So the trajectory is:

Canaan → World → New Creation

D) The people of God are no longer defined by geography

In the New Testament:

- God's people are defined by **faith in Christ**, not by land borders.
- The "holy place" is now:
 - Christ
 - And His people
 - And ultimately the **New Jerusalem**

E) This does not mean God "lied" or "canceled" the promise

It means:

The promise was **always bigger** than the symbol.

Just like:

- The temple pointed to Christ
- The sacrifices pointed to the cross
- The land pointed to the **kingdom of God**

3. How This Affects Christian Theology Today

1 Christians should not treat any modern state as "the Kingdom of God"

No nation today = God's kingdom.

2 Christian hope is not geopolitical, but eschatological

Our hope is:

The **return of Christ** and the **renewal of all things**

3 The church does not conquer territory — it inherits a kingdom

"My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36)

Important Balance

This passage:

- Does **not** answer every modern political question
- Does **not** deny Jewish history or suffering
- Does **not** justify hatred or violence

- Nor does it rule out a future for the Jews' salvation, but this is not associated with a land, or an earthly millennial kingdom in Jerusalem.

It simply tells us:

The Bible itself says the **ultimate meaning of the land promise is heavenly and universal**, not merely Middle Eastern and political.

In One Sentence

Hebrews 11 teaches that Canaan (Palestine) was a real but temporary and symbolic inheritance, pointing forward to the **true and final inheritance: God's eternal city and the renewed creation**, which is inherited by faith, not by ethnicity or geography.

Big Picture

Eden → Canaan → Christ → New Creation

Extra notes: Wilderness: From Promise to Expectation

Israel is redeemed from Egypt **before** they receive the land.

This establishes a pattern:

Redemption comes first, inheritance comes second.

They don't get the land:

- By merit
- By power
- But because God keeps His covenant.

Joshua: Inheritance Becomes Reality

In Joshua:

- The word **"inherit" / "inheritance"** is everywhere.
- The land is:
 - **Assigned by God**
 - **Given by lot**
 - **Received, not seized**

And the key theological summary:

“Not one word of all the good promises the LORD had made had failed.”
(Josh 21:45)

So Joshua shows:

God is **not only a promiser**, but a **promise-keeper**.

But the Inheritance Is Conditional in Enjoyment, Not in Promise

Later books (Judges, Kings, Prophets) show:

- Israel can:
 - **Lose peace**
 - **Lose security**
 - Even **lose the land temporarily** (exile)

Why?

Not because God broke His promise — but because they broke the covenant.

So:

- The **title** to the inheritance = God’s promise
- The **experience** of the inheritance = depends on obedience

The Land Itself Is Only a Shadow of Something Bigger

The prophets begin to expand the idea:

- Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel speak of:
 - A **renewed land**
 - A **renewed people**
 - A **renewed creation**

And Psalm 37 says:

“The righteous shall inherit the land...”

But now “land” starts to mean:

The world made right under God’s rule.

The New Testament: Inheritance Is Reframed and Expanded

A) Jesus

Jesus says:

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” (Matt 5:5)

Not just Canaan:

The **whole renewed creation**.

Paul

Paul says:

The promise to Abraham was not just about land, but about **the world** (Romans 4:13).

And:

Believers are now **heirs with Christ** (Romans 8:17)

So inheritance becomes:

- Eternal life
- The kingdom of God
- The renewed creation
- Full adoption as God’s children

Hebrews

This is crucial:

Hebrews 4 says:

Joshua **did not give the final rest**.

Meaning:

Canaan was a **preview**, not the destination.

And Hebrews 11 says:

Abraham was looking for a **better country — a heavenly one**.

1 Peter and Revelation: The Final Inheritance

Peter says:

We have “an inheritance that is **imperishable, undefiled, and unfading**, kept in heaven” (1 Peter 1:4)

Revelation ends with:

Not souls escaping earth, but **heaven and earth renewed**.

So the final inheritance is:

The whole creation restored, with God dwelling with His people.

Theological Summary

Across the whole Bible:

Stage	Inheritance Means
Genesis	A promised land
Joshua	A received land
Prophets	A purified land
Gospels	The kingdom of God
Epistles	Eternal life & new creation
Revelation	The renewed heaven and earth

The Big Idea

The land in Joshua is a **real, historical gift**, but also a **preview and symbol** of the ultimate inheritance: life with God in a fully restored creation.

Why This Matters Spiritually

Just like Israel:

- We are:
 - Redeemed first
 - Traveling now
 - Not home yet

We live:

Between **promise** and **possession**.

In One Sentence

The “inheritance” in Joshua is the historical fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham and the theological **foreshadowing of the final inheritance of God’s people: the restored creation under God’s eternal rule.**

- **Eden** → **Canaan** → **New Creation** forms one unified story
- This shapes Christian hope, perseverance, and holiness today.

Cities of Refuge (Joshua 20)

These show:

- God cares about **justice, mercy, and due process**
- Even in conquest, God is:
 - Protecting the innocent
 - Limiting vengeance
 - Teaching Israel to be different from surrounding nations

Levitical Cities (Joshua 21)

The Levites:

- Do not get a tribal territory
- Are **spread among all Israel**

Meaning:

Worship, teaching, and God's Word are to be **central everywhere**, not isolated.

And this chapter ends with the great promise-fulfillment statement.

Joshua 22: The Altar Crisis

(Jos 22:1) Then Joshua called for the Reubenites and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh,

(Jos 22:2) and said to them, You have done all that which Moses the servant of Jehovah commanded you. And you have listened to my voice, to all that I have commanded you.

(Jos 22:9) And the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh returned. And they departed from the sons of Israel out of Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan, to go to the land of Gilead, to the land of their possession, in which they have possession, according to the Word of Jehovah by the hand of Moses.

(Jos 22:10) And when they came to the borders of Jordan in the land of Canaan, the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh built an altar of grand appearance there by Jordan.

(Jos 22:11) And the sons of Israel heard, Behold, the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh have built an altar opposite the land of Canaan, in the borders of Jordan, at the passage of the sons of Israel.

(Jos 22:12) And when the sons of Israel heard, the whole congregation of the sons of Israel gathered themselves at Shiloh to go to war against

them.

(Jos 22:13) And the sons of Israel sent Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest to the sons of Reuben, and to the sons of Gad, and to the half tribe of Manasseh, into the land of Gilead, (Jos 22:14) and with him ten rulers, a ruler from each of the chief houses throughout all the tribes of Israel. And each one was a head of the house of their fathers among the thousands of Israel.

(Jos 22:15) And they came to the sons of Reuben, and to the sons of Gad, and to the half tribe of Manasseh, to the land of Gilead, and they spoke with them saying, (Jos 22:16) So says all the congregation of Jehovah: What trespass is this that you have committed against the God of Israel, to turn away today from following Jehovah, in that you have built an altar for you so that you might rebel this day against Jehovah?

(Jos 22:17) Is the iniquity of Peor too little for us, from which we have not been made clean until today? Yea, a plague came on the congregation of Jehovah!

(Jos 22:18) But must you turn away today from following Jehovah? It shall be, you rebel today against Jehovah, and tomorrow He will be angry with all the congregation of Israel.

(Jos 22:19) But surely if the land of your possession is unclean, pass over to the land of the possession of Jehovah in which Jehovah's tabernacle dwells, and take possession among us. But do not rebel against Jehovah, nor rebel against us in building an altar for yourselves besides the altar of Jehovah our God.

(Jos 22:20) Did not Achan the son of Zerah commit a sin in the cursed thing, and did not wrath fall on all the congregation of Israel? And that man did not perish alone in his iniquity.

(Jos 22:21) And the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh answered and said to the heads of the thousands of Israel, (Jos 22:22) Jehovah, the God of gods, Jehovah, the God of gods shall know, and Israel shall know if it is in rebellion or in transgression against Jehovah (you shall not save us alive today), (Jos 22:23) that we have built us an altar to turn from following Jehovah. Or if we have built an altar to offer on it burnt offering or food offering, or if to offer peace offerings on it, let Jehovah Himself require it.

(Jos 22:24) And if we have not done it for fear of this thing, saying, In time to come your sons might speak to our sons, saying, What have you to do with Jehovah, the God of Israel?

(Jos 22:25) For Jehovah has made Jordan a border between us and you, sons of Reuben and sons of Gad. You have no part in Jehovah. And your sons shall make our sons stop fearing Jehovah.

(Jos 22:26) And we said, Let us now prepare to build us an altar, not for burnt offering, nor for sacrifice,

(Jos 22:27) but it shall be a witness between us and you, and our

generations after us, so that we might do the service of Jehovah before Him with our burnt offerings and with our sacrifices and with our peace offerings; so that your sons may not say to our sons in time to come, You have no part in Jehovah.

(Jos 22:28) And we said that when they should say so to us or to our generations in time to come, that we may say, Behold the pattern of the altar of Jehovah which our fathers made, not for burnt offerings nor for sacrifices, but it is a witness between us and you.

(Jos 22:29) Far be it from us that we should rebel against Jehovah and turn this day from following Jehovah, to build an altar for burnt offerings, for food offerings, or for sacrifices, besides the altar of Jehovah our God that is before His tabernacle!

(Jos 22:30) And Phinehas the priest, and the rulers of the congregation and heads of the thousands of Israel with him, heard the words that the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the sons of Manasseh spoke. And it was good in their eyes.

(Jos 22:31) And Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest said to the sons of Reuben and to the sons of Gad and to the half tribe of Manasseh, Today we see that Jehovah is among us, because you have not committed this sin against Jehovah. Now you have delivered the sons of Israel out of the hand of Jehovah.

(Jos 22:32) And Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, and the rulers, returned from the sons of Reuben, and from the sons of Gad, out of the land of Gilead, to the land of Canaan, to the sons of Israel, and brought them word again.

(Jos 22:33) And the thing pleased the sons of Israel. And the sons of Israel blessed God and no more said to go up against them in battle, to destroy the land in which the sons of Reuben and Gad lived.

(Jos 22:34) And the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad proclaimed regarding the altar, that it was a witness between us that Jehovah is God.

The eastern tribes build a **large altar**.

The western tribes think:

They are committing apostasy!

They almost go to war.

But:

- The altar is **not for sacrifice**
- It is a **witness** to unity and shared faith

This chapter shows:

- Israel is learning:
 - To care about **faithfulness**
 - To **seek understanding before civil war**
 - To preserve **unity around true worship**

Theological Themes of Joshua 14–22

1 God Keeps His Promises

This is the **main point**.

2 Rest Is Given, But Must Be Maintained

“The LORD gave them rest on every side” (21:44)

But Judges will show:

- Rest must be guarded by **obedience**

3 Unity Matters

Joshua 22 shows:

- The land is divided
- But the people and worship must remain **one**

4 Faith Must Continue After Victory

It’s easier to trust God in battle than in **settled life**.

These chapters prepare Israel for the danger of:

Forgetting God in comfort.

In One Sentence

Joshua 14–22 shows Israel receiving the Promised Land as a gift from God, proving that **not one of God’s promises failed**, while also teaching them how to live faithfully, justly, and united within that gift.

Big Picture in Joshua

- **1–12** → Conquest: God gives victory
- **13–22** → Settlement: God gives inheritance
- **23–24** → Commitment: God demands faithfulness

In **chapter 23**, as Joshua neared death, he reminded Israel of God's faithfulness.

JOS 23:1 After a long time had passed and the LORD had given Israel rest from all their enemies around them, Joshua, by then old and well advanced in years, ² summoned all Israel--their elders, leaders, judges and officials--and said to them: "I am old and well advanced in years. ³ You yourselves have seen everything the LORD your God has done to all these nations for your sake; it was the LORD your God who fought for you. ⁴ Remember how I have allotted as an inheritance for your tribes all the land of the nations that remain--the nations I conquered--between the Jordan and the Great Seaⁿ in the west. ⁵ The LORD your God himself will drive them out of your way. He will push them out before you, and you will take possession of their land, as the LORD your God promised you.

JOS 23:9 "The LORD has driven out before you great and powerful nations; to this day no one has been able to withstand you. ¹⁰ One of you routs a thousand, because the LORD your God fights for you, just as he promised. ¹¹ So be very careful to love the LORD your God.

JOS 23:14 "Now I am about to go the way of all the earth. You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the LORD your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed. ¹

God fulfilled his promise to Abraham – the people now had a land.

CONNECTING THE DOTS.

Canaan is a **picture of the resting place** [see Hebrews 4] and inheritance of God's people where they will live at peace in relationship with God.

Israel's living in the land is therefore nothing less than a picture of God's kingdom.

This means that the entry into the land and the act of possessing the land are pictures for us of God's kingdom coming.

Entry into the land shows us God's gracious act of bringing his people into his kingdom.

The battles involved in possessing the land show us what must happen within a rebellious world for that place to become the kingdom of God.

Hence the fall of Jericho gives us a picture of God's sovereign claim being exercised and his judgment falling to establish his kingdom.

You may remember that Jesus specifically said the O.T. was about him.

To put it differently Jesus says the Old Testament gives us a picture of God's plans, it gives us a kind of blueprint of what God's up to.

And so, it's not a separate story to what God then does in Jesus, it's a picture of the same story.

So, this passage is to teach us about what God does and will do in Jesus.

I want to suggest that what we have here is a picture of God establishing his kingdom.

Now this stands in sharp contrast to Israel's unfaithfulness and sin.

Chapter 24 – renewal of the Covenant.

A. Joshua remembers God's great works on Israel's behalf.

1. (1) Joshua speaks to the nation again, through its leaders.

Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem and called for the elders of Israel, for their heads, for their judges, and for their officers; and they presented themselves before God.

a. Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem:

This was a dramatic last gathering of Israel before the passing of Joshua. It may or may not be part of the same farewell described in Joshua 23. No specific place of gathering is mentioned in Joshua 23, so it could have been part of this same meeting at Shechem.

b. To Shechem: Shechem was a place of rich history for Israel.

There were at least four notable events there in lives of the patriarchs. In the first two instances we see *Shechem was a place of calling and commitment*. In the second two we see *Shechem was a place of shame*.

c. Called for the elders of Israel... their heads... their judges... their officers; and they presented themselves before God: This was an impressive gathering. The leaders of the nation met together at this significant place, meeting in the conscious presence of **God**.

2. (2-4) God's faithfulness to the patriarchs.

And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'Your fathers, including Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, dwelt on the other side of the River in old times; and they served

other gods. Then I took your father Abraham from the other side of the River, led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his descendants and gave him Isaac. To Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. To Esau I gave the mountains of Seir to possess, but Jacob and his children went down to Egypt.”

i. There are ancient legends (*only* legends) that say Abraham served the LORD God among the idol worshippers that he was raised among. One legend says that Abraham’s father Terah was an idol maker and seller with his own shop. One day Terah had some business to do, so he left Abram in charge of the idol shop. While his father was gone, Abram took the biggest idol and set him in the middle of the shop floor. Then he put all the other idols in a circle around the biggest idol. Then Abram took a hammer, smashed all the smaller idols and put the hammer in front of the one big idol that was still standing. When his father came home, Terah was angry and asked Abram why he smashed all his idols. Abram explained that it wasn’t he who did it; it was the one large idol with the hammer in front of it. Terah became even more angry and said, “Abram you know that that idol is nothing but a statue and can’t do anything like that.” Abram answered, “Yes father, that is true. If they cannot do anything, why do we make and sell them for people to worship as gods?”

c. **Then I took your father Abraham from the other side of the River:** Before God challenged Israel, He reminded them of His faithfulness. His goodness was shown at the very beginning of His dealings with Abraham and Abraham’s descendants.

3. (5-7a) God’s faithfulness in the escape from Egypt.

“Also I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt, according to what I did among them. Afterward I brought you out. Then I brought your fathers out of Egypt, and you came to the sea; and the Egyptians pursued your fathers with chariots and horsemen to the Red Sea. So they cried out to the LORD; and He put darkness between you and the Egyptians, brought the sea upon them, and covered them. And your eyes saw what I did in Egypt.”

a. **Also I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt:** God did not leave Israel in slavery in Egypt forever. When the time was right, He **sent** a deliverer to His people.

b. **Your eyes saw what I did in Egypt:** There were still many among the leaders and elders of Israel who were children when Israel came out of Egypt, and who saw God destroy the Egyptian army at the Red Sea.

4. (7b-10) God’s faithfulness in the wilderness.

“Then you dwelt in the wilderness a long time. And I brought you into the land of the Amorites, who dwelt on the other side of the Jordan, and

they fought with you. But I gave them into your hand, that you might possess their land, and I destroyed them from before you. Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose to make war against Israel, and sent and called Balaam the son of Beor to curse you. But I would not listen to Balaam; therefore he continued to bless you. So I delivered you out of his hand.”

a. **Then you dwelt in the wilderness a long time:** Through Joshua, the LORD summarized most of the Exodus journey with this one sentence.

i. Notably missing from this review of Israel’s history is any mention of Israel’s sin, rebellion, and failure. Though God recorded those things at their time (in Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy), when He reviewed their history through Joshua He made no mention. Later, God said *their sin I will remember no more* ([Jer 31:34](#)). Here, it was as if He had “forgotten” Israel’s past sin.

b. **Arose to make war against Israel:** Numbers 21-24 makes it clear that the war Balak made against Israel was *spiritual* in nature. He wanted to destroy them either through Balaam’s curse (which did not work) or through the seduction and idolatry of the Moabite women (which worked somewhat). Though it wasn’t a **war** fought with swords and spears, it was a **war** nonetheless.

5. (11-13) God’s faithfulness in the Land of Canaan.

“Then you went over the Jordan and came to Jericho. And the men of Jericho fought against you; also the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. But I delivered them into your hand. I sent the hornet before you which drove them out from before you, also the two kings of the Amorites, but not with your sword or with your bow. I have given you a land for which you did not labor, and cities which you did not build, and you dwell in them; you eat of the vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant.”

a. **You went over the Jordan and came to Jericho... But I delivered them into your hand:** Speaking through Joshua, God linked the *ancient* history of Israel (all the way back to Abraham) to their *current* history. This is what God had done among them in their own lifetime.

b. **Not with your sword or bow. I have given you a land for which you did not labor... vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant:** There is a sense in which every blessing is undeserved, but some are more obviously so. When Israel enjoyed vineyards and olive orchards in Canaan, it should have made them *especially* grateful for undeserved blessings.

B. Choosing to covenant with the LORD.

1. (14) The challenge: serve God exclusively.

Now therefore, fear the LORD, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the LORD!

a. **Now therefore, fear the LORD, serve Him in sincerity and in truth:** This was not a blind leap of faith. They saw God's works and experienced His blessings, so it made *sense* for them to exclusively serve a God who had done so much for them.

b. **Serve the LORD:** In the review of Israel's history, we might say that God contrasted His great work with three sets of gods, associated with three waters.

- [Jos 24:2-4](#) shows that on the other side of the Euphrates were the gods of Sumerian and Babylonian culture – *gods of heritage*.

- [Jos 24:5-7](#) a shows that on the other side of the Red Sea were the gods of ancient Egypt – *gods of upbringing*.

- [Jos 24:7](#) b-13 and 24:15 shows that as they crossed the Jordan there were the gods of the Amorites – *gods of your culture*

c. **Serve Him in sincerity and truth:** Joshua boldly called for a *deep* commitment and a *true* commitment.

2. (15) Choose God or choose your alternative.

And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.

a. **If it seems evil to you to serve the LORD:** Joshua just gave a strong exhortation to *serve the LORD!* ([Jos 24:14](#)) Perhaps some among them *did not want to* serve the LORD. What of them?

b. **Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve:** If they chose *not* to serve the LORD, they were then responsible to choose which God they **will serve**. They might choose to serve the gods of their heritage (**the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River**) or they might choose to serve the gods of Canaan (**the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell**). Yet they had to make a choice. Everyone serves some kind of god (or, God).

Some interpret this verse as Joshua's call to choose between Yahweh and the pagan gods.

It is not.

Joshua is not facing with that kind of choice.

The choice not between the true God and the pagan gods, the choice

is between the pagan gods.

If they did not serve Yahweh, they should consider which pagan gods they will serve.

c. **But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD:** Joshua offered an alternative for those who did not want to **serve the LORD** as he encouraged in [Jos 24:14](#). Yet his course was clear and sensible – *he chose to serve the LORD*.

d. **But as for me and my house:** This shows that Joshua also understood that he, as the priest of his family, was charged with the responsibility to see that his whole **house** served **the LORD**. He had the job of representing his whole house before God.

e. **But as for me and my house:** The contrasting word “**but**” gives the sense that Joshua was determined on this course no matter what anyone else thought. His relationship with God was not based on any man, but on the LORD alone, and he would serve God no matter what anyone else did.

f. **We will serve the LORD:** Inherent in Joshua’s declaration is that he would **serve the LORD only**; he would not **serve the LORD** *and* someone or something else. There was one God in his life, and that God was the LORD.

3. (16-18) Israel responds: they also will serve the LORD.

So the people answered and said: "Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods; for the LORD our God is He who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, who did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way that we went and among all the people through whom we passed. And the LORD drove out from before us all the people, including the Amorites who dwelt in the land. We also will serve the LORD, for He is our God."

a. **For the LORD our God is He who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt:** Significantly, their declaration is based on God’s past dealings with them. How could they *not* serve such a great God?

b. **We also will serve the LORD, for He is our God:**

4. (19-21) *Joshua cautions against a lightly made commitment.*

But Joshua said to the people, "You cannot serve the LORD, for He is a holy God. He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and consume you, after He has done you good." And the people said to Joshua, "No, but we will serve the LORD!"

a. **You cannot serve the LORD, for He is a holy God:** Joshua is not trying to discourage their faith but trying to discourage a light

commitment to following the LORD. They need to be reminded that they are serving God under a covenant that *promised* they would be cursed for disobedience.

b. **No, but we will serve the LORD:** This was the response Joshua wanted: a commitment but made with full understanding of the consequences.

5. (22-28) *A covenant renewed.*

So Joshua said to the people, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the LORD for yourselves, to serve Him." And they said, "We are witnesses!" "Now therefore," he said, "put away the foreign gods which are among you, and incline your heart to the LORD God of Israel." And the people said to Joshua, "The LORD our God we will serve, and His voice we will obey!" So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made for them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem. Then Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God. And he took a large stone, and set it up there under the oak that was by the sanctuary of the LORD. And Joshua said to all the people, "Behold, this stone shall be a witness to us, for it has heard all the words of the LORD which He spoke to us. It shall therefore be a witness to you, lest you deny your God." So Joshua let the people depart, each to his own inheritance.

Now therefore... put away the foreign gods which are among you, and incline your heart to the LORD God of Israel: They *said* they were willing enter into and obey God's covenant. Joshua

c. **So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day:**

"Literally, *Joshua cut the covenant*, alluding to the *sacrifice* offered on the occasion." (Clarke)

C. The death of Joshua and Eleazar.

1. (29-31) *A beautiful epitaph for Joshua.*

Now it came to pass after these things that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being one hundred and ten years old. And they buried him within the border of his inheritance at Timnath Serah, which is in the mountains of Ephraim, on the north side of Mount Gaash. Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had known all the works of the LORD which He had done for Israel.

a. **Being one hundred and ten years old:** Joshua died at a ripe old age and was buried in the land of his own inheritance. There seemed to have been no great funeral or mourning for him, as was surely his wish – to simply be known as **the servant of the LORD**.

b. **Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua:** This was the greatest legacy of Joshua. His godly influence was effectively communicated to and through the whole nation.

2. (32) *The burial of Joseph's bones.*

The bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel had brought up out of Egypt, they buried at Shechem, in the plot of ground which Jacob had bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for one hundred pieces of silver, and which had become an inheritance of the children of Joseph.

- a. **The bones of Joseph:** This may seem like an inconsequential point, but it fulfills [Gen 50:25](#). God likes to tie up loose ends. This is also mentioned in [Heb 11:22](#) as an example of Joseph's faith.

3. (33) *The death and burial of Eleazar.*

And Eleazar the son of Aaron died. They buried him in a hill belonging to Phinehas his son, which was given to him in the mountains of Ephraim.

- a. **And Eleazar the son of Aaron died:** Eleazar's death meant that another link with the wilderness generation had passed. Now Phinehas was High Priest.
- b. **They buried him:** As the generations pass, they are each challenged to conquer the land of blessing and promise that God has for them - and we will do it, as they pay close heed to our Joshua, to Jesus Christ.