

# Bible Reading Notes

January 2012

Friday, January 27th - Joshua 8: 23

The army of Ai had been lured out of its city and destroyed by Israel's men of war. Yet, the king of Ai, who had led his army to its destruction (v.14), was spared by the Israelite soldiers and brought to Joshua alive. It was not pity or carnal indulgence that prompted Israel to spare this king. Joshua had special plans for the execution of Ai's king that would indicate to Israel and to the world the cursed status of that king and all Canaanite kings he represented (v.29). Our God, by His holy judgment, will not destroy the body of the wicked while leaving the head alive. Satan and all of his wicked servants will be judged and rightly condemned in the final day of the Lord's reckoning.

Saturday, January 28th - Joshua 8: 24-26

There is righteous ruthlessness evident in the killing described in these verses. Not only were the soldiers of Ai who were caught in Israel's vise killed, but also the fighting men of Israel returned to the city of Ai to kill all of the people who remained there. This was not senseless slaughter, however. It was a judicial execution carried out under the orders of Joshua who had himself been ordered by no less authority than God to kill all of the Aites (Josh. 8:1,2). We do well to recall also the character of these Canaanites whose judgment day had come upon them when they were expecting an easy victory. That judgment fell upon them from the hand of the Lord in His timing due to the fullness of their iniquity (Gen. 15:16). On the final day, divine judgment will come upon all of the wicked who have ever lived when they least expect it (Rev. 6: 12-17; 18:4-24). How great should be our gratitude for the gracious divine deliverance we have received in Christ from that day of ruthless righteousness.

Sunday, January 29th – Joshua 8: 27

Unlike the prohibition the Lord placed upon Israel at Jericho, here at Ai God allowed His people to partake of the spoils of their victory. The ban at Jericho served to make clear to God's people that victory is always the Lord's while the spoil the Israelites are now granted teaches the Church in all ages that her only safe and satisfying blessing is not that which her members take by their own power or cunning but rather is that which they receive gratefully from their wise and loving Lord. Matthew Henry well remarks on this in his commentary when he writes: The way to have the comfort of what God allows us is to forebear what He forbids us.

Monday, January 30th - Joshua 8: 28, 29

It would seem that the killing of the Aites and taking of their spoil would complete Israel's victory. However, Joshua takes steps in these verses to display to all with eyes rightly to see that Ai was thoroughly desolated by righteous Israel due to the wickedness of the Aites who refused to submit to the God who had made them. Furthermore, Ai's king was hanged on a tree to reveal the cursed nature of the wicked government of all natural men (Dt. 27:26). Our heavenly King was hanged on a tree to save His people (Gal. 3:10,13); but the kings of the earth lead their people and themselves to death, destruction, and desolation, unless they humble themselves and lead their people to trust in the King of kings.

Tuesday, January 31st - Joshua 8: 28, 29

We read in these verses of Joshua making the burned remains of Ai into a heap forever and of his raising over the destroyed city and its dead and cursed king an enduring heap of stones. Accordingly, Joshua erected not only a memorial to Israel's complete victory over her enemies, but also an enduring warning to all of the wicked in all ages that while it is appointed by God that all people die, there comes after death a judgment and eternal condemnation of the wicked (Heb. 9:27).

Wednesday, February 1st - Joshua 8: 30, 31

After their conquest of Jericho and Ai, the people of Israel take what appears to be a non-strategic detour. The entire nation moved from its base in Gilgal (Josh. 4:19; 5:9,10; 9:6) to Mount Ebal near Shechem about 30 miles north of Ai. The Israelites moved not to destroy more of their enemies but to dedicate themselves to their saving God. Therefore, although this move was a detour from the work of battle, it was actually the main design of Israel's entrance into and conquest of Canaan. The people of Israel, who knew and worshipped the one true and living God, were called out of Egypt and into the Promised Land so that they might worship and serve their saving Lord according to His revealed will in the land that He had given to them for that purpose (Ex. 5:1; Josh. 1:2-8). Our God who lays upon us the duty of our work (Gen. 3:19) also calls us to the delight of our worship of and holy rest in Him.

Thursday, February 2nd - Joshua 8: 30, 31

Joshua erected an altar to the Lord at Ebal, near Shechem. It was fitting that an altar should have been built in the place where Abraham was first informed by God that he was in the land the Lord had promised to him (Gen. 12:6,7). The action of Joshua and Israel in their going to Shechem, riding the wave of two decisive victories over their enemies in the Promised Land, was indicative of the fact that the work God begins for, in, and through His people, He brings to completion in His perfect time and way (Phil. 1:6).

Friday, February 3rd - Joshua 8: 30, 31

Joshua led Israel to Shechem in general but to Ebal in particular. Ebal was a mountain near to another mountain named Gerizim. Moses gave specific instructions to Israel to go to these two mountains, dividing themselves with half of their tribes on Mount Gerizim to bless the people and the other half of their tribes on Mount Ebal to curse the people (Dt. 11:19; 27:11-13). These blessings and cursings were to be pronounced as the consequences that would issue from Israel's obedience to God's holy Law (for blessing) or her disobedience (for cursing). Accordingly, the people of God were to have impressed upon them the critical reality that whether they were blessed or cursed depended upon their being in vital and holy communion with and obedience to their God, and not upon whatever victories or defeats they experienced. Such devotion to the just God who curses all sin and who blesses sinners with His justifying grace is the secret of satisfying and lasting contentment, whether we abound or are abased in our circumstances (Phil. 4:10-13).

Saturday, February 4th - Joshua 8: 30, 31

Joshua built the altar on Ebal, the mount of cursing, rather than on Gerizim the mount of blessing. This was in accordance with the specific instructions of the Lord through Moses (Dt. 27:1-8). Our blessing comes to us because God has provided Himself a sacrificial offering vicariously to bear the cursing and punishment His people deserve due to their manifold violations of His holy Law. Believers live lives of abundant blessing because God has made His Son, who knew no sin, to become sin for us, bearing the full curse of God's holy wrath, so that we in Him might become the righteous ones (2 Cor. 5:21).

Sunday, February 5th - Joshua 8: 30, 31

Joshua built the altar not only in the place specified by God through Moses, but also he constructed the altar in strict accordance with the specifications of the Lord (Dt. 27:5,6). It was to be made of rough stones, unaltered by the hand and artistry of man. Such an altar best pointed to the rough cross upon which the Lamb of God poured out His life to take away the sins of His people. Sinners neither know how to go about saving themselves, nor do they have power or even desire to do so even if they knew how. We are saved by God alone, in His way alone, through His redeeming sacrifice of His Son alone.

Monday, February 6th - Joshua 8: 30, 31

From the whole range of offerings God instructed His people to perform in the Book of Leviticus, only two types were offered by Joshua and Israel on the Mount Ebal altar. The burnt offerings represented the whole punishment of the people's sins and the complete acceptance by God of the sacrifice (Lev. 1). The peace offerings represented the results of the burnt offerings, namely, reconciliation of God to the sinner through this offering and blessed peace between the Lord and His people (Lev. 3). These two

offerings most clearly typified the accomplishment and application of redemption through the death of Christ.

Tuesday, February 7th - Joshua 8: 30, 31

Joshua and all Israel took careful and exact steps to go to Shechem, to build an altar on Mount Ebal, and to offer specific sacrifices on that altar. All of those steps were directed by and in accordance with God's Word given to them through Moses. All of those steps were so carefully and blessedly taken by the people of God in Joshua's day and they pertained only to the shadows and types of salvation. Should we not be more intent upon our devotion to the living, loving substance of our salvation, now that He has come and died so that we might have eternal and abundant life?

Wednesday, February 8th - Joshua 8: 30, 31

The steps Joshua and all Israel took as described in these verses typified the promise of redemption accomplished through the atoning sacrifice of the Savior. The salvation, blessing, and lasting security of the people of God involved but did not depend upon their defeating all of their earthly enemies. The supreme blessing of the chosen people of God depended upon God giving Himself as the atoning sacrifice for their sins, and God's establishing peace, thereby, between Himself and His people. We do well to understand this because we are prone to seek our blessing and joy, our security and peace, in our attempts to fashion circumstances to our liking, rather than in our gratefully receiving and resting upon the person and work of our Savior, and faithfully conforming our attitudes and actions to Him and to His will revealed to us in His Word.

Thursday, February 9th - Joshua 8: 32-35

The matters recounted in vv.30,31 pertain to the accomplishment of salvation that had been promised by God and would be in due course provided through Christ. The matters recorded in vv.32-35 deal with the application and working out of salvation in the lives of God's people. It is of greatest significance that we find the writing and reading of the Law of Moses following the sacrifices on the altar that point to the person and work of Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of His people by His own atoning death. The invariable order we are given in Scripture and in all formulations of the genuine gospel is that God's reconciling work through Christ always precedes and provides the foundation for believers' good works according to the regulation of God's Law. We are saved by God's infinitely costly sacrifice of His Son, and as fruits of our having received such gracious salvation we love and endeavor to regulate our lives by the holy Law of God.

Friday, February 10th - Joshua 8: 32

We find in Deuteronomy 27:1-4 the basis for Joshua's writing the Law of Moses on the stones mentioned in this verse. From the passage in Deuteronomy we are informed that Joshua was to set up stones in addition to those used for the altar, and that it was upon those stones, covered with lime, that Joshua was to write this copy of the Law of Moses. No explanation is given in Scripture as to whether there is any significance in a comparison between how Moses delivered this Law and how Joshua produced this copy. Much of our understanding would depend upon whether the phrase, Law of Moses signifies the Ten Commandments or the entirety or a selected portion of the Pentateuch. Certainly if we are to compare the Ten Commandments, engraved directly by the finger of God into tablets of enduring stone, with Joshua's lime-coated stones having the Law written on the white surface that covered those stones, we might see a hint of the eventual superficiality of Israel's grasp and application of the Law that was to develop in her future generations. It is also intriguing to consider that while the Law was clearly written for the foundational generations of Israelites entering the Promised Land with Joshua, its transmission to future generations would depend, by God's design, upon the fidelity of the living stones of the covenant nation in their knowing, obeying, and instructing their children in God's Law. The clear fact is that whatever might be the significance of the form God through Moses to Joshua chose to use for the writing of this copy of the Law, Israel's love for and living by that Law did fade increasingly over the course of her history because that law was not engraved on the hearts of her people. May we never be superficial hearers and readers of God's Word only, but rather let us be effectual and sincere doers of the Word.

Saturday, February 11th - Joshua 8: 32, 33

After Joshua produced his copy of the Law of Moses on lime-coated stones, the living stones of Israel positioned themselves in accordance with the Law of Moses that had previously been recorded in Deuteronomy 27:12,13. That positioning of the tribes of the covenant nation was a matter of God's determination just as it had been the Lord who determined the positioning of His people in the battles of Jericho and Ai. However, in her warfare, Israel's positioning had been strategic and largely practical. Now in her worship, Israel's positioning is intended to portray spiritual significance. That significance is that all of Israel neither has been nor ever will be the true and eternally blessed Israel. These divided tribes do not present the literal reality that all of the tribes placed on Mount Ebal, the mount of cursing, were actually cursed. Instead, this divinely sanctioned drama vividly warns the Church in every age that it is not he who merely hears the Word but rather it is the one who effectually heeds it that is saved (Mt. 7:21; Jas. 1:21-25; 2 Pet. 1:5-11).

Sunday, February 12th - Joshua 8: 32, 33

We perceived the commendable faithfulness of the people of Israel when they followed the priests through the parted Jordan, when they marched repeatedly around Jericho, and when they repented of

their sin at Ai, displaying the fruit of their repentance as they obediently followed the Lord's strategy of victory over Ai. Here at Shechem we also perceive remarkable fidelity in the actions of the people of Israel when they follow to the letter and in the spirit all that the Lord had commanded them to do. Half of the tribes, by their willingness to portray themselves as accursed ones on Mount Ebal, serving as a vivid admonishment to the Church in every age, show the lovingly sacrificial spirit of the Apostle Paul when he declared his willingness to be accursed for the sake of the salvation of his brethren (Rom. 9:1-5). Let us, therefore, not refuse to take the part of lowly servants in the Lord's kingdom if our so humbling ourselves is according to God's Word and serves to help our brethren (Phil. 2:1-8).

Monday, February 13th – Joshua 8: 34, 35

Joshua did not only write the entire Law of Moses on the white-washed stones, he also read it all to a convocation of all Israel. Whether by the designation, Law of Moses, we are to understand the Ten Commandments, or the words of blessing and cursing in Deuteronomy 27, 28 or the Shema (Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!) that begins in Deuteronomy 6, or the entire Book of Deuteronomy or the entire Pentateuch, the essential thing that Joshua's writing and reading the entire Law of Moses at Shechem teaches the Church in every age is that her charter is to be the whole counsel of God contained in all of Scripture (Acts 20:27; 2 Tim. 4:1,2). Reduced versions of Scripture reduce and distort the gospel of Christ and the God who reveals Himself to us in His Word.

Tuesday, February 14th - Joshua 8: 34, 35

These verses stress that all of the Law of Moses was not only written and read aloud by Joshua, but also that it was heard by all of the Lord's covenant people. Israel was summoned to appear before Joshua to hear the reading of God's Word. Israel responded to that summons, not in the form of her representative elders and tribal leaders, but, as v.35 makes quite clear, in the form of the entire body of the people. Not only did all the men gather, but they were joined by all of the women of Israel as well as by all of the children of the covenant. Even strangers, who would have been converts to the God of Israel gathered from the Egyptians and nations with which Israel had contact (some of it fighting contact!) through her 40-year wilderness trek (including Rahab), were gathered to hear the whole counsel of God read. Here is portrayed to us one of the fullest manifestations of the Church of God in its earthly sojourn. We, too, are summoned not to forsake our regularly assembling together to worship our saving God and to feed on the means of His grace (Heb. 10:24,25).

Wednesday, February 15th - Joshua 8:34, 35

We surely learn from these verses that the total commitment of the totality of the people of God to hear and heed the entire Word of God as it is ministered by the Lord's duly appointed servants is the true calling of the Church not only in Joshua's day but in every generation throughout all of this world's history. Let us with grateful sincerity and hearty zeal take our rightful place in this glorious company of the redeemed, being committed hearers and effectual doers of God's Word.

Thursday, February 16th - Joshua 9: 1, 2

As the people of Israel gathered at Shechem to worship the Lord through their offerings and to hear and apply to themselves the reading of God's Word, the kings of Canaan were gathering as well. The timing of this gathering of the Canaanite kings is indicated by the word, when, in v.1. What determined this timing of the formation of this Canaanite confederacy? It was when these kings heard of it. Heard of what? Not only of Israel's warfare but also and especially of her worship. The acting of the Church of God in the world will always beget a reaction from the world, usually one of persecution of the Church. And while the worldly hate and despise our good works, they especially hate and dread our worship of the God against whom they know they have sinned and to whom they refuse to submit. Let us determine to continue to act in reverence even in the face of the world's rage. The God we revere sets a feast for us in the very faces of our snarling foes (Ps. 23:5).

Friday, February 17th - Joshua 9: 1, 2

When the covenant people act, the world does not merely react, but often reacts in a way that imitates the action of the Church. Therefore, as Israel had gathered her tribes and all the members thereof at Shechem, so these Canaanite kings gather themselves together into an alliance against Israel. But whereas the people of Israel freely gathered in a spirit of grateful reverence to devote themselves to their loving and saving Lord, and in a spirit of loving communion and cooperating together to edify one another, the Canaanites forced themselves to overcome their mutual animosities. Their cities were walled largely to ward off attacks from each other, not from Israel. Yet, their dread of Israel had overarched their petty infighting. The worldly are naturally at one another's throats, until some greater dread drives them to cooperate temporarily. If they do succeed in overcoming their common threat, they will invariably return to their petty squabbles. Meanwhile, the Lord's people are bound to their saving God and to each other with cords of love that are stronger than death.

Saturday, February 18th - Joshua 9: 1, 2

We are told of the resolve of these Canaanite kings in v.2. They gathered not faithfully and gratefully to devote themselves to God and lovingly to edify each other. Instead, they fearfully and with supreme regard for self-preservation gathered, each king looking to and expecting from the others protection from Israel, their common foe. Specifically, these kings resolved to fight against Joshua and Israel, the

earthly leader and the corporate community of God's chosen and redeemed people. Accordingly, these kings of Canaan follow the invariable pattern of the worldly in every age, who take counsel together against the Lord and His redeemed people (Ps. 2:1-3). Not only have the worldly ever counseled together against Christ and His people, they also have fought against the Head and body of the Church repeatedly throughout history and will continue to do so until the end of time. Recall Haman's determination to kill Mordecai and all of the Jews of his day (Esther) and how the unbelieving Jews and Gentiles of Jesus' day crucified our Savior and persecuted His Church (Mt. 23:22-25; Acts 9:1,2,4). The natural man as an individual ever kicks against the goads of God's inviting grace. Such unregenerate individuals join together in fighting against the God who appeals to them to partake of His salvation and join with His people in their loving family ties.

Sunday, February 19th - Joshua 9: 1, 2

We clearly perceive how irrational as well as unrighteous is the resolve of the Canaanite confederacy of kings to fight against the covenant people who were being led and empowered by the King of kings. These petty earthly rulers actually thought that they could prevail against the people before whom the Jordan River had parted and the walls of Jericho had fallen. The Canaanite kings were seriously pitting their finite and fallible strategies against the infinite and infallible wisdom of the Lord, who always leads His people into triumphs over all of their enemies, as He had just done with His people at Ai. It is not only hard for people to kick against the goads of God's grace, appealing to them through the lives and testimony of His people, it is a resistance of deadly stupidity.

Monday, February 20th - Joshua 9: 3-6

Not all of the inhabitants of Canaan joined the confederacy of the kings who opposed Israel. For the remainder of this ninth chapter our attention is focused upon the people of Gibeon and their cunning and successful attempt, not to fight against or flee from the covenant people of God, but rather to join them as servants among the servants of the Lord. Something different from the fearful but arrogant martial spirit of the kings of Canaan prompted these Gibeonites to seek to save themselves, not by their joining their natural neighbors in resisting Israel, but by their subtle persistence to join Israel as servants of the covenant people. What are we to make of this break in the Canaanite ranks? One thing immediately clear to us is that the people of Gibeon profited more from their submission to God's people than they would have from their resistance against the covenant nation.

Tuesday, February 21st - Joshua 9: 3-6

When the Canaanite kings heard of Israel's worship of God at Shechem, they joined together to fight against Joshua and Israel (vv.1,2). Scripture makes no mention of the Canaanite kings knowingly fighting against Israel's God, but rather gives us insight into the thoughts and intentions of the natural man, who



foolishly says that there is no God, yet who determines to fight against all who devote themselves to the true and living God. The Gibeonites' action was prompted not by a hatred of Israel's worship so much as a dread of Israel's works (v.3). They saw rightly in the victories of Israel over Jericho and Ai not the work of a deluded people whom they could destroy, but the hand of extraordinary wisdom and power to which they were determined to surrender. Those whom the Lord determines graciously to draw to Himself often have their eyes opened to see first the wondrous works of Christ's people and then to give glory to the God who empowers His people to do such works (Mt. 5:16).

Wednesday, February 22nd - Joshua 9: 3-6

The Gibeonites determine not to fight but rather to fool Israel. In many respects, the stratagem of the people of Gibeon resembles that which the Lord directed Joshua and Israel to employ against Ai. The Gibeonites disguise themselves as people from a distant land merely sojourning in Canaan, just as Israel and disguised themselves as cowards fearfully fleeing from the pursuing Aites. What would have led the people of Gibeon to adopt such a stratagem? They clearly knew about the Lord's promise to give all of Canaan to His people and they further knew of the Lord's directive to His people that they should slay all of the indigenous Canaanites. Accordingly, the Gibeonites fashioned their stratagem of disguise in accordance with what they knew about God's Word and about the power of God working for His people. Despite all of their imperfections in their response to what they knew of God's Word, these Gibeonites resemble not only the Israelites in their disguises, but they also resemble Rahab in her faith by which she feared the Lord and sought to be at peace with Him and with His people (Josh. 2:8-13). The truth is that all sinners who would be saved must disguise themselves, not ultimately by their own cunning but by their donning the perfect righteousness of Christ (Rom. 13:14). All who resolve to fight God in their natural filthy rags of unrighteousness must and will perish.

Thursday, February 23rd - Joshua 9: 3-6

As absurd as it is for the Canaanite kings to think they can fight and prevail against a people before whom a river parted and the strong walls of a great city fell, so it might seem to us absurd that these Gibeonites would think that they could disguise themselves successfully before a people whose God knows all things, including the thoughts and intentions of men. Yet we shall see that whereas the strong defiance of the former is crushed by the almighty hand of God, working for and through His people, the subtle disguise of the latter succeeds. Why is this so? Surely it is because the God of grace and salvation is not fooled by deceitful outer appearances but instead regards the true intention of men's hearts. He is not offended by our foolish and imperfect attempts to appropriate His grace, but ignores the smoke in order to fan the smoldering wick into a brightly burning flame (Is. 42:3).

Friday, February 24th - Joshua 9: 3-6

Observe how carefully the Gibeonites have planned and prepared themselves credibly to resemble that of which they speak before Joshua and Israel. They treated the trash of their old and worn clothing and possessions as treasures upon which Israel's acceptance of their lie would depend. The first words they speak to Joshua and Israel, as recorded in v.6, are deceitful: We have come from a far country. Because they were speaking a lie, they had to depend heavily upon their props. Yet they also expressed their true desire when they added the words: make a covenant with us. If these Gibeonites show such diligence in their attempt to live a convincing lie, should we who are truly in Christ not show greater diligence in our putting off our old selves and putting on the compassion, kindness, humility, and gentle patience of our new natures in Christ (Col. 3:12)?

Saturday, February 25th - Joshua 9: 6

The Gibeonite envoys express both a lie and a longing in their words to Joshua and the men of Israel. Their lie was their claim to have come from a distant country. Their longing was to be at peace with Israel and to confirm that peace through a covenant. What these poor, trembling Gibeonites joined together as what they regarded to be components essential to their survival, we shall see the Lord tearing asunder. For God will overrule both the lying of the Gibeonites and the credulity of Joshua and Israel in order graciously to grant what the hearts of Gibeon's people desired while casting away the deceit uttered by their mouths and supported by their props. The Lord will make the Gibeonites truly to be citizens of heaven and to enjoy righteous peace securely made not by their pretense but by the holy passion of Christ. Let us learn from this that we need not lie to our Lord or to our brethren but we may speak the truth in love, knowing that our God hears the longing cries of our hearts and lovingly responds to all that we truly desire to have from Him.

February 2012

Sunday, February 26th - Joshua 9: 6, 7

Despite the deceitful props and proclamation of the Gibeonites, Joshua and the men of Israel show at least initial discernment when they refuse to take at face value the appearance of the men of Gibeon. The Lord equips His people with all that they need to see what is right and what is wrong and to cleave to the former while refusing the latter. Because our great enemy, Satan, is a liar and a murderer, God tells us in His Word not to believe every spirit and every claim to truth that we encounter, but rather to test them to make certain that they are of God (1 Jn. 4:1-6). Such spiritual discernment is a gift of God to His people and is the essential first step toward our knowing and doing right in any situation.

Monday, February 27th - Joshua 9: 7, 8

In response to the challenge presented to them by the discerning men of Israel, the Gibeonites speak only the truth. When they declared themselves to be the servants of Israel, they expressed their true desire and determination. They also expressed what they did not then know but only vaguely and fearfully hoped, namely, that they were destined to become Israel's servants. Read Joshua 9:27 to see to what blessed servitude Joshua eventually assigned the Gibeonites. The Lord always hears and heeds the truth that men speak. Our clever evasions and lies He disregards, at best, as chaff to be blown from the wheat of veracity. At worst, God holds men to their lies, if that is all they speak and desire, and casts them ultimately into the lake of fire prepared for the devil who is the father of lies.

Tuesday, February 28th - Joshua 9: 7, 8

The men of Israel suspected one aspect of the truth when they declared that the Gibeonites were perhaps living within the land given to Israel by the Lord. The Gibeonites declare another aspect of the truth when they answer simply: we are your servants. Mixed in with the truth the men of Gibeon spoke was the elaborately contrived claim that they were men from a far off country. Clearly, the Gibeonites depended heavily upon their lie but only slightly upon the truth they spoke. There was no necessity for this deception. For the men of Israel asked them in view of their supposition that the Gibeonites were dwelling in the Promised Land: how then shall we make a covenant with you? To this question, the men of Gibeon could have cast off their deceit and declared not only their desire to be servants of Israel but also sons adopted into Israel. The God who had moved His people to accept Rahab and her family into Israel on the basis of her faith would surely have shown the Israelites how they could have made a covenant with these people who by faith were prepared to renounce their natural heritage in order to be accepted into the commonwealth of God's people. The terms for any sinner's entrance into the kingdom of God and eternal life are far easier than any of them even begin to ask or imagine.

Wednesday, February 29th – Joshua 9: 7, 8

There is an intriguing connection to be observed between this deception of the Gibeonites and the determination of the prodigal son to return to his father (Lk. 15:11-32). In both cases those involved determined to dress themselves in the shackles of slavery and dared not to think of, still less to ask for, better terms for their reception. In the parable of the prodigal, the father refused to accept his son as a slave but rather treated him as a beloved and honored son. None of us grasps fully the glory of our God's grace that accepts us in our sinful rebellion and defiled corruption and miserable bondage and transforms us into beloved and exalted children of God (Jn. 1:12). We have a tendency to be like the prodigal and the Gibeonites, asking and expecting little from our heavenly Father when He desires and determines to give to us all that He is and has.

Thursday, March 1st - Joshua 9: 8-10

To the Gibeonites' assertion that they were the servants of Israel, Joshua responds with questions not about their position but rather about their persons and the place of their origin. Men can adopt a servant's attitude but they cannot change who they are and from where they have come. These questions posed by Joshua prompt the men of Gibeon to answer with a mixture of truth and a lie. In direct answer to Joshua's question the Gibeonites lie, saying they have come from a distant country. However, they hasten to add that they came specifically because they had heard of the wonders the Lord had performed for Israel in Egypt and in the wilderness. They do not mention anything about Israel's conquest of Jericho or Ai because such reports would likely not yet have reached any distant nation from which they were supposed to have come. It was almost certainly true that the Gibeonites had been deeply impressed with the reports of the great works of the Lord for Israel. Rahab told the spies how all the Canaanites had heard such news (Josh. 2:10,11). Yet, while the confederation of Canaanite kings gathered to fight against Israel, the Gibeonites are determined to surrender to and serve Israel. Because of this determination, the Gibeonites would find themselves made right with Israel and with Israel's God, despite the fact that they imperfectly made their application to the God of truth and of saving love.

Friday, March 2nd - Joshua 9: 11

What the men of Gibeon say in this verse is likely entirely true. From vv. 3,4 we learn that the leaders of Gibeon did counsel together and determine to secure a covenant with Israel, though such a covenant would bind them to servitude to God's people. What the envoys of Gibeon here do not tell Joshua is how they had decided to act with cunning in their securing of the covenant they desired. Thanks be to God that we need not act craftily in our coming to Him, but rather we can come to the Lord openly and honestly as His enemies and be accepted by Him as His servants, soldiers, friends, and beloved children.

Saturday, March 3rd - Joshua 9: 12-14

The Gibeonites continue to bury the truth of who they were and where they were from in a matrix of deceit. They draw Joshua's attention to their props that lend credence to their claim. We are told that the men of Israel considered these props and the claims of these strangers, but most significantly we are also told that they did not seek the omniscient and infallibly wise counsel of the Lord that was theirs, as it is ours, for the asking (Jas. 1:5,6). We are told repeatedly in Scripture that we are not to judge by outer appearances but by the heart of men and of matters. We can discern such inner realities only when we seek the help of the living God who discerns all things, even men's thoughts and intentions (Heb. 4:12,13). No other course is approved and commended by the Word of God. Let us learn from this to ask more, not less, for the counsel of our Lord.

Sunday, March 4th - Joshua 9: 14, 15

Joshua and the men of Israel began their examination of the Gibeonites with wise discernment. They concluded it with a determination that rested upon outward appearance rather than inner reality. Scripture clearly faults them, not so much for what they did but for how they did it. They rested their judgment upon their own consideration rather than upon the sure counsel of the Lord. Even if the covenant Israel made with the Gibeonites was right in the sight of God, because it issued from sight rather than faith, it was sinful. Let us learn from this to pray without ceasing, asking for the help and blessing of our Lord not only in matters that are confusing to us but also in matters that appear very clear to us.

Monday, March 5th - Joshua 9: 14, 15

The reason the Gibeonite envoys donned their disguises and presented their props and the reason that Joshua and the men of Israel were initially suspicious of the Gibeonites was that the Lord had clearly in His Word forbidden His people to make a treaty with any people residing within the Promised Land (Ex. 23:32; 24:12; Num. 33:55; Dt. 7:2). The Israelites were allowed, however, to make treaties with nations outside of Canaan's borders (Dt. 20:11). In a matter so clearly stipulated in God's Word and so serious and lasting in its implications for the covenant nation then and for generations thereafter, it was imperative that Joshua and the men of Israel should exercise far more faithful and prayerful consideration than they did before they granted an allowance that they themselves initially suspected to have been prohibited by God's Word. It took three days for the Israelites to learn the truth, even without their having inquired of their Lord. Why did they not wait before they acted? If we do not see the light from God's Word, then in due course we shall see it from His works of providence.

Tuesday, March 6th - Joshua 9: 14, 15

Joshua and the leaders of Israel made a covenant of peace with the people of Gibeon. This peace was gained by the deceit of one party and the credulity of the other party. It was bad faith that led to a bad covenant being made, but the result was that of true and lasting peace between Israel and the Gibeonites. If the parties had consulted the Lord, they would not have been told that there could be no peace between them, for such lasting peace is precisely what the sovereign Lord ordained by His gracious authority and allowed and established by His providence. Had the parties consulted with the Lord, He would have told the Gibeonites to stop their lying and Joshua to have accepted them as trophies of His exceptional grace. There are times when we resort to cunning or to careless self-reliance to get what we want, when our Lord stands ready to give that and so much more to us just for our asking Him.

Wednesday, March 7th - Joshua 9: 14-16

Israel's leaders judged the Gibeonites by outward appearances. Our Lord warns His people clearly not to look on outward appearances but rather to judge by the real heart of the matter. How we can discern hidden realities is by our praying to our God who knows all things and who reveals to us all that we need to know to decide the true, right, good, wise, and loving thing to do in all situations. Why we should judge by inner reality is made clear to us in v.16. Outward appearances are neither real nor lasting. It only took three days for the truth of who the Gibeonites were to come to the attention of Israel's leaders. By their deception the Gibeonites benefited greatly but it was not to the credit of Israel's leaders that they neglected the counsel of the Lord while invoking His name to secure the covenant they made with the Gibeonites. Let us learn ever to seek only that which is real and enduring and that comes to us only from the hand and heart of our Lord.

Thursday, March 8th - Joshua 9: 16-18

These verses record for us how the sons of Israel discovered and sought to deal with the deception of the Gibeonites. The discovery was rapid and resulted from no inquiry on the part of Israel's leaders. Instead, those leaders who were certain that they had made a covenant based on good faith soon heard a report that they had been duped. As Achan's sin of his taking the things under the Lord's ban at Jericho would have been no sin had he waited for the Lord to make a gift to him of Ai's plunder, so here the leaders of Israel would have known the truth about the Gibeonites immediately had they asked the Lord, and soon thereafter had they merely waited. Many costly sins are sins only because the decisions made and deeds done are untimely. When we do something can be just as critical as what we do. We never do wrong when we ask and wait upon the Lord.

Friday, March 9th - Joshua 9: 16-18

On the day that Israel's leaders made a covenant of peace with the envoys from Gibeon, the Gibeonites reckoned, and rightly so, that they had gained greatly by their entering into such a covenant. After three days the leaders and people of Israel discovered how much they had lost by their superficial and prayerless consideration and rash action. From the Israelites having gained the two fortified cities of Jericho and Ai, they quickly learned that they had lost the four cities listed in v.17. Their gain was the fruit of their seeking, trusting, and obeying their Lord. Their loss resulted from their ignoring the Lord while heeding the representations of sinful men and relying on their own understanding. Believers gain when they take God at His Word; they lose when they take the word of men and inconsiderately give their word.

Saturday, March 10th - Joshua 9: 16-18

As soon as the sons of Israel learned the truth about the Gibeonites and their deception, they determined to invest another three days traveling to Gibeon and its sister cities in order to deal with the

matter further. We might expect that the Israelites would nullify their covenant with the Gibeonites, on the basis of the bad faith of those who had deceived them. Then we might expect Israel to destroy the Gibeonites. However, contrary to reasonable expectation, Israel spared the people of Gibeon. The reasoning of the covenant people apart from the revelation of their God had led them into this trouble. To their credit, the Israelites resist the temptation to rationalize their way out of their trouble. Due to the reverence they had recovered for the name of the Lord whom they had previously ignored, the people of Israel rightly determined to trust the Lord for His blessing to come to those who swear in His name and keep their pledge to their own apparent hurt (Ps. 15:4).

Sunday, March 11th - Joshua 9: 17-19

In a sense, the sons of Israel set out for Gibeon filled with righteous wrath against those who had offended them and diminished their inheritance through deceitful cunning. Yet the wrath of Israel is stayed because of the covenant of peace that the leaders of Israel had entered into with the Gibeonites. Although this covenant was sinfully and inconsiderately entered into by all parties, the Israelites did well to respect the essence of a covenant they had sealed by their swearing in the name of their Lord. Accordingly, sinfully and imperfectly yet truly do the children of God demonstrate the holy and perfect covenant of God's grace whereby the Lord spares us from His righteous wrath by His interposing His saving mercy between sinners and His just condemnation.

Monday, March 12th - Joshua 9: 17-19

Although the sons of Israel respect what is right in view of the covenant they had made, they were not happy to do so. Therefore, we are told that the people grumbled against their leaders who had committed them to the covenant with the Gibeonites. This is an example of a people counting the cost after they had made their commitment. Our Lord tells us to count the cost before we commit (Lk. 14:27-30). Our Lord certainly counted the infinite cost He would bear to save His people. He did this freely and lovingly and not in the least begrudgingly (Jn. 3:16; Gal. 2:20).

Tuesday, March 13th – Joshua 9: 17-19

The leaders of Israel, by their failure to seek God's counsel, led the people into a situation that was injurious to them. However, when the people complained, those same leaders took a stand for what was right in the new situation. They also led the people into a respect for and acceptance of what was right. It is a mark of true spiritual leaders, not that they do all things perfectly, but rather that they recover from their faulty decisions and seek ways to make the best, not the worst, of the painful results of their imperfect leadership. These leaders understood, before their followers understood, that if they were to violate their pledge, they would have been guilty of a greater sin with more painful consequences than was the sin of their having entered into this covenant with the Gibeonites. Our Lord,

who is our perfect leader, always sinlessly causes even our sinful failures to work for our good, and we do well to stop our grumbling and to be grateful for His blessed shepherding of us.

Wednesday, March 14th - Joshua 9: 19, 20

When the Lord's people give their word and seal it by swearing to the Lord, they bind the living God to their word. Above all things, the Lord keeps His Word. When He promises and swears an oath by His own name that He will save us, nothing in heaven, earth, or hell, nothing in time or eternity or our own faithless attitudes and actions will compel Him to break His Word to us (Heb. 5:13-20). Therefore, the sons of Israel did well to regard with supreme reverence the sacred name of the Lord, by which they swore, and not to dishonor His name in an effort to regain the four cities they forfeited by their own inconsideration.

Thursday, March 15th - Joshua 9: 19, 20

The Israelite leaders rightly understood, and sought to convey that understanding to the congregation, that none of them could harmfully touch any of the Gibeonites. The validity of this understanding would be proven years later when David sought the counsel of the Lord in view of a famine that had plagued Israel for three years. Then the man after God's heart was told that the famine fell upon the nation for the sins of their previous king, Saul, whom they had chosen on the basis of his strong outward appearance. Specifically, Saul had sinned when he put to death the Gibeonites, who were still living in Israel and serving in the tabernacle in Saul's day (2 Sam. 21:1-3). What reverence and obedient regard we should have for the name of our Lord and for all in which His name is involved!

Friday, March 16th - Joshua 9: 19-21

The leaders of Israel know and impress upon the congregation of Israel what they could not do to the Gibeonites in view of their having made with them a covenant of peace and having sealed it by their swearing in the name of the Lord. However, these leaders also sense the foul way in which the Gibeonites had abused their lives and liberties when they deceived Israel. Accordingly, the Israelite leaders see and seize a way to bring some degree of curse upon the Gibeonites that would not be a violation of their covenant. The leaders let the Gibeonites live but deprive them of their liberty. The envoys of Gibeon had repeatedly claimed to be Israel's servants, and so Joshua sentenced them to become Israel's servants in reality, cutting wood and hauling water for the covenant people. This sentence of servitude, however, was to prove to be no curse but rather a rich blessing. For those who blessed Israel by their service would themselves be blessed by Israel's God for many generations. Especially those who cut wood and drew water for the tabernacle and later temple sacrifices would be blessed by the Lord and would bless His name in response to His saving grace so clearly typified in Israel's worship (2 Sam. 21:1-14; 1 Chron. 12:4; Neh. 3:7; Ps. 84:1-4).



Saturday, March 17th - Joshua 9: 22, 23

In these verses, Joshua calls the Gibeonites to account for their cunning deception. He then proceeds to impose upon them the curse of their being made perpetual slaves for the house of the Lord, the God against whom they had sinned when they deceived His people. It may seem unjustly rash that Joshua should move directly from the trial to the sentencing of the Gibeonites, without ever hearing and considering the account they would give for their actions. However, nothing they could say would change the wise, holy, and just decision Joshua and Israel's leaders had already made to spare the lives of the Gibeonites while at the same time compelling them to serve for the blessing of the covenant people whom they had defrauded. This is a shadow of the just and unalterable decrees of the Lord of justice and mercy.

Sunday, March 18th - Joshua 9: 22-25

Although the Gibeonites may have sought to save their lives and to preserve their liberty through their deceiving of the sons of Israel, they would succeed in the former and fail in the latter. Yet for the Gibeonites the greater blessing would prove to be not Israel's sparing of their lives but Israel's cursing them and compelling them to serve in the house of the Lord, the God of Israel. As the prodigal son reckoned it to be better to be a slave in his father's house, so the sons of Gibeon would find their highest blessing in their servitude in the house of the Lord.

Monday, March 19th - Joshua 9: 24, 25

In these verses, the Gibeonites respond to Joshua's demand that they give an account for why they had deceived Israel. Such a demand would seem unnecessary. It would be obvious to anyone that men who, with good reason, feared for their lives would resort to any measure to save their lives. However, Joshua is not inquiring into the obvious here but rather is providing an opportunity for the Gibeonites to shed their disguise and reveal what they truly sought from the God and people of Israel. The Gibeonites seize this opportunity, for all that they say at this point is true and sincere. Also, far from their boasting in the letter of the covenant they had extorted from Israel by their deceit, they humble themselves under the living hands of the Lord and His people. Such honesty and sincere humility under the mighty hand of God will gain for such people infinitely more than their cunning disguises ever could.

Tuesday, March 20th - Joshua 9: 24, 25

The confession of the Gibeonites is very significant. Its features reveal to us that those who began with a deceptive claim to be mere sojourners in Israel's land end by becoming legitimate members of the

covenant nation. They who had feigned being Israel's servants truly became not only servants but also blessed sons of the God of salvation. It is not only a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb. 10:31), it is also a tricky thing to come to Him and to His people and ordinances, thinking to trick them only to find themselves blessedly trapped and transformed by the Lord and His people.

Wednesday, March 21st - Joshua 9: 24, 25

The first thing the Gibeonites confess is that they are truly, sincerely, and openly the servants of Joshua and Israel. Here where they are casting off their disguise, they cleave to what they had initially told Joshua: We are your servants (Josh. 9:8). The curse of servitude Joshua put upon them they gratefully accept as the Canaanite woman would centuries later do when she found cause to rejoice that Jesus acknowledged her as a dog who could expect at least crumbs from His table. It is better to serve at the threshold of the house of the Lord than to reign elsewhere (Ps. 84:10).

Thursday, March 22nd - Joshua 9: 24, 25

The Gibeonites delight to be the living servants of Israel rather than to have faced the alternative. For they knew with certainty from God's Word to His people through His servant Moses that they were destined to lose their lands and their lives at the hands of Israel. The prelude to the good news of eternal life is one's sincere acknowledgement that he is a sinner in the sight of God, justly deserving His holy displeasure, and having no hope except in His sovereign mercy.

Friday, March 23rd - Joshua 9: 24, 25

In view of the divine decree of destruction for all of the Canaanites, the Gibeonites rightly feared for their lives. They did not want to die (who does?). They also bowed to the sovereign might of the Lord, knowing that no people or alliance of peoples (such as the alliance we encountered in the opening verses of this chapter) could stand against the Israelites who were empowered by their almighty God. Therefore, the Gibeonites, in fearful desperation, donned their disguises and sought to be accepted by the Israelites as their servants. The repentance of the Gibeonites from their sinful deception is indicated by their referring to it as this thing, instead of their clinging to it as their only hope and sure necessity. But they do not repent of their having come to the sons of Israel and surrendering to them as their servants. They learned and demonstrated to all readers of this account that all those who come to the Lord sincerely rather than sinfully disguised will have no regrets but only rejoicing.

Saturday, March 24th - Joshua 9: 24, 25

The Gibeonites have accounted honestly for their deception and proceed to deliver themselves humbly into the hands of Israel and of Israel's God. Theirs is a sincere surrender. They tell Joshua with the word, behold, that he can now believe all that he sees in them. They deliver themselves no longer into the fondly hoped for deceptive power of their disguises, but rather now give themselves into Joshua's hand, knowing that if he determines it to be good and right for them to live as slaves or be killed as wicked deceivers, they will humble themselves under the judgment of Israel's leader. Those who so humble themselves will find that they need fear not condemnation but can anticipate exaltation (1 Pet. 5:6).

Sunday, March 25th - Joshua 9: 25, 26

The Gibeonites willingly placed their lives not in the letter of the covenant so much as in the spiritual hands of Joshua, the leader of the nation they had offended by their deception. Such action shows that the Gibeonites trusted not only in the righteousness of Israel's leader but also in his goodness. Their surrender is a practical appeal for saving mercy. The response of Joshua does not disappoint their longing for such mercy. The first thing Joshua did was to deliver the offenders from the righteous anger of those whom they had offended. This deliverance was not from slight anger or material loss. Joshua saved the Gibeonites from death. He whose name means savior lived up to that name. All who put their forfeited lives into the hands of Jesus (the Greek form of Joshua) will find merciful deliverance from death, divine judgment, and eternal condemnation.

Monday, March 26th - Joshua 9: 26, 27

While Joshua delivered the Gibeonites from death he also delivered them to lives of perpetual servitude. They would perform menial tasks for the congregation of Israel (the living stones of the temple of the Lord), and they would serve also in the tabernacle (and later the temple). Their special labors would pertain to the altar of the Lord and in the place of the Lord's choosing. Therefore, these cunning inhabitants of Canaan who were doomed to death by the revealed decree of the Lord, are placed in blessed and life-transforming proximity to the shadow of the cross and the Savior who mercifully delivers all who place their lives in His hands. This arrangement was honored by Israel and by the Lord Himself, whose providence not only allowed it but also punished Israel when their first king put the Gibeonites of his day to death (2 Samuel 21:1). Therefore, in Israel's dealings with the Gibeonites we find a classic example of the Lord's sinless use of men's sins to manifest His glory and accomplish their highest good. The secret counsels of the Lord unfold through His providence, and as marvelous as His revealed will is to us, His secrets, when manifested, show us that His greater glory is hidden not from us but for us. There are more wonders to life and to our Lord than we have been told, even by our God in His Word.

March 2012

Tuesday, March 27th - Joshua 10: 1, 2

The two verses that opened chapter nine told us of the Canaanite coalition that had formed against Israel. The rest of that chapter dealt with the covenant Israel made with the Gibeonites. With the opening verses of chapter ten, our attention returns to the malice and martial determination of the Canaanite kings. The covenant people of God, having negotiated a challenge that arose through the guile of the Gibeonites, are now obliged to deal with the numerous external enemies that surround them. The Church of the living God must always contend with fears within and enemies without. But we who belong to the Church can rejoice, knowing that our Savior has overcome the world (Jn. 16:33).

Wednesday, March 28th - Joshua 10: 1, 2

Joshua 9:1 specifies three regions: the highlands in the north of Canaan, the lowlands in the south, and the coastal strip in the west. Within these regions six tribes of Canaanites are mentioned: Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. Of these, the king mentioned in Joshua 10:1 was a Jebusite who dwelt in the city and held the position of Melchizedek to whom Abraham had paid tithes and by whom the father of the faithful was blessed (Gen. 14:18-24). The name, Adoni-zedek, means lord of righteousness, while Melchizedek means king of righteousness. But whereas Melchizedek had a godly nature to match his name, and while his city, then called Salem, pointed to the Christ, the King of peace (Heb. 7:1-28), Adoni-zedek was seized by godless fear that arose from his unrighteous alienation from the God of peace. How different was this Canaanite king and how greatly had his kingdom changed since the days of Melchizedek and Abraham. Under Melchizedek there was life and peace and blessing; under Adoni-zedek there was fear and determined resistance that would end in his death and the death of his people. For all of their cunning, the Gibeonites demonstrate that salvation is to be had only by one's surrender to the God of righteousness.

Thursday, March 29th – Joshua 10: 1, 2

The king of Jerusalem learned that, in addition to Israel's destruction of Jericho and Ai, Gibeon had defected to Israel. The defection of such a great Canaanite city with its mighty soldiers added greatly to Adoni-zedek's dread of Israel. It is not so much the triumphs of the Church against her foes as it is the Church's winning of her erstwhile enemies into her ranks that the wicked dread.

Friday, March 30th – Joshua 10: 1-4

The facts of the situation are set out in v.1. Joshua had led his people to glorious victories over Jericho and Ai, while he had entered into a covenant of peace with the Gibeonites. How did the king of

Jerusalem feel about these facts? He feared. What did he do in response to these facts? He called for an alliance of Canaanite kings in the Southern part of the land to fight. However, he could have humbled himself and sought to follow the example of the people of Gibeon and make peace with Israel. The Gibeonites' situation with Israel was more than a crumb of incentive for any Canaanites to seek the blessing of peace with Israel and with Israel's God. The world daily beholds marvels of the Lord's saving grace operating in the changed lives of those who have heard and heeded the call of Christ for all who are weary to come to Him for rest. Yet, the wicked continue to refuse the call and cleave instead to the filthy rags of their self-righteousness, and rely on the power of their own flesh to prevail against God and the godly whom they fear as their enemies.

Saturday, March 31st – Joshua 10: 3, 4

Although the king of Jerusalem feared Joshua and Israel, the target of his attack was not Israel but rather the people of Gibeon, who had entered into a covenant with Israel. Jesus has made it clear to His people that all who make peace with Him will find themselves at war with the world (Jn. 15:18). We see this to be true even in the old covenant as the worldly regard peace made by any people with Joshua, the mere shadow of Jesus, to be a cause for the wicked to declare war against such people (Ps. 2:1,2). Even on a personal level, the unregenerate hate and oppose any among them who by the mercy and power of God come to have new life in Christ. Recall how the enemies of Jesus sought to put Lazarus to death after Jesus had raised him from the dead (Jn. 12:9-11).

Sunday, April 1st - Joshua 10: 3, 4

Adoni-zedek not only targets Gibeon but also enlists four other kings to help him rain destruction upon those who had thought they would be secure in their peace with Joshua. When people draw near to the God of salvation, they are feared and hated by those who will not hesitate to instigate attacks against them with overwhelming force. Recall how the Syrian soldiers surrounded Elisha and his servant (2 Ki. 6:8-19), and how a company of temple guards surrounded Jesus in Gethsemane (Jn. 18:1-6). Yet while many may arise against us because we have made our peace with God, greater are those (even if not more numerous) who are with us than those arrayed against us. The Elisha's beheld a host of angels surrounding the Syrians, while Jesus simply said, I am and those who came armed and numerous to arrest Him fell to the ground.

Monday, April 2nd - Joshua 10: 3-5

The king of Jerusalem issued a call to four of his fellow kings for war against Gibeon. All of those kings who received that martial call eagerly and with unreserved commitment responded to it. Those who are fearfully insecure due to their not knowing the peace of God that passes understanding are most ready to employ force and engage others in a concerted fight against the righteous. Sin is an aggressive force

within the hearts of the unregenerate. It is not a mere negation of righteousness but rather prompts the sinner to fear, hate, and determine to destroy the righteous, especially those who have newly entered into the kingdom of the righteous Lord of heaven and earth. But although the wicked strike the righteous, it is only the wicked who fall dead before the righteous. For the Lord has promised that no weapon brought against His people will ever prevail against them (Isa. 54:15-17).

Tuesday, April 3rd - Joshua 10: 6

As soon as the Gibeonites were attacked, they demonstrated their reliance upon their covenant with Israel. The men of Gibeon cry to the peace-granting party of their covenant, rightly reckoning that the terms of that covenant established peace between themselves and Israel and also entailed Israel's guarantee of peace to the Gibeonites from their enemies. The terms of the Lord's covenant of grace are extravagantly generous, granting us peace with our God and pledging to us that no matter what enemies or accusers we may encounter, our God is for us and will not let any of them prevail against us (Rom. 8:31-39).

Wednesday, April 4th - Joshua 10: 6

The Gibeonites at this point may or may not have had saving faith in Israel's God. However, they certainly demonstrate the perseverance and ingenuity of faith in Joshua and Israel as their temporal saviors and helpers. Those who exercise faith become masterfully effective in wrestling vital blessings from the Lord and from the godly.

Thursday, April 5th - Joshua 10: 6

The character of the call from the Gibeonites to Joshua is instructive for our petitioning God and men. There are seven components to their cry: 1) negatively, they ask that Israel not abandon them, as the Lord's people would have been tempted to do, justifying it as a merciful provision of God to let them out of the obligations of their covenant with Gibeon; 2) positively, they once again plead their status of being Israel's servants; 3) they cry not for a mere contribution but for a commitment from Israel when they cry: come up to us; 4) they stress their vital and urgent need when they petition Joshua and Israel to respond quickly to their call; 5) the magnitude of the commitment they request is great, if not total, when they ask Israel to save them or die trying; 6) they ask for Israel's help and saving work, indicating that so long as they have life they will serve with and for Israel, contributing to their own welfare while depending vitally upon Israel for their lives; 7) the final point of their petition stresses the overwhelming force that is arrayed against them. Surely in our prayers to our Lord we can identify with and learn from this manifold, earnest, and expectant petition that the men of Gibeon send to Joshua.

Friday, April 6th - Joshua 10: 6, 7

In these verses we have the call for help issued by the Gibeonites and received by Joshua. Now the cost of Joshua's prayerless commitment to a covenant with those who had deceived him becomes apparent. However, because Joshua and the leaders of Israel had been prayerless in the matter of their covenant, it did not by any means follow that these Israelite leaders were godless men. They had sinned by their neglecting the Lord in a critical matter that contained more costly consequences than they could have anticipated. But when their sin increased, God's grace abounded all the more. Accordingly, Joshua and the leaders of Israel give no thought to compounding their sin by their refusal to help the beleaguered people with whom they had entered into a covenant. They rightly reckon that they would find blessing from the Lord in their keeping to the uttermost the pledge they had given to the people of Gibeon in His name. It would be costly for Joshua and Israel to keep their covenant pledge, but it would be for them infinitely less costly than it would be for the Lord to keep His covenant pledge to His sinful people to save them with His own blood. Therefore, the Israelites, having sworn, will keep their word to their own hurt (Ps. 15:4), and find God richly blessing their costly fidelity that is really a fruit of His own costly fidelity.

Saturday, April 7th - Joshua 10: 6, 7

The call goes out to Joshua and Israel for saving help. Were the Israelites obliged by their covenant to answer these cries? Because they had pledged not to destroy the Gibeonites themselves, did their pledge extend to their having to save the Gibeonites from being destroyed by others? Legalistic minds and small hearts may reason thusly, but Joshua and all Israel dismissed such self-regarding casuistry from their minds. Without hesitation, Joshua and all of Israel's fighting men, especially the most valiant, went up from Gilgal to rescue the people of Gibeon. Such a response beautifully demonstrates to us the loving and faithful way the greatest in the kingdom should treat those who are least and of newest standing in the kingdom of God. Let us, then, learn to give as great respect to the least of our brethren as we would afford to the greatest of them.

Sunday, April 8th - Joshua 10: 7, 8

It may appear that Joshua's response to the call of the Gibeonites was as rash and prayerless as had been his entering into covenant with them. However, the character of God and of His covenant with Israel clearly dictated Joshua's course of action even without prayer. Yet, the fact that the leader of Israel was in faithful communion with the Lord is indicated by the words of encouraging promise Joshua hears the Lord speak (v.8). Therefore, the Israelites may have engaged themselves in bearing a burden

when they covenanted with the Gibeonites, but it would prove to be a light and even blessed burden to Israel because of their being yoked by faith and obedience to their Lord in this matter.

Monday, April 9th - Joshua 10: 7, 8

The commitment of Israel was swift and sure. The Lord confirmed that commitment with His Word of prohibition and promise. God prohibited His people from fearing their numerous enemies. The promise of the Lord is manifold as the Lord told His people that He would be with them and that they would be super-conquerors through Him (Ps. 108:12,13).

Tuesday, April 10th - Joshua 10: 7-9

As fully committed as Joshua and the men of Israel were in their response to the Gibeonites' cry, the confirmation of the Lord that He gave to His people further quickened and greatly encouraged them in their endeavor. Freed from their fears and emboldened and invigorated by the Lord's promise of total victory, Joshua and his soldiers moved diligently and with alacrity, covering the distance between Gilgal and Gibeon (a distance of about 20 miles), moving upward in elevation and unhindered by the darkness of night. Truly, those who wait upon and work for and with the Lord mount up with wings like eagles, swiftly and effectively to do His wondrous will.

Wednesday, April 11th - Joshua 10: 9, 10

The quickening effect the Lord's Word had upon the workers of His will resulted in Israel taking their enemies completely by surprise. Furthermore, as the Lord quickened His people in the accomplishment of His will, so He confounded the wicked in the attempt to work their sinful will against His people and their servants. We can always count on our God to be for us and at the same time against our enemies. If we trust and obey Him, we shall find our holy resolve strengthened, our loving and righteous endeavors empowered effectually, and the world, flesh, and devil scattered before us.

Thursday, April 12th - Joshua 10: 10, 11

God had promised to be with His people as they fought against the armies of the Canaanite kings who had attacked Gibeon. Yet, as ever, the Lord is not only as good as His Word, but He proves in His works to be better than His Word. Israel's God not only gave the Canaanite kings and their armies into Joshua's hands, but He also took those Canaanites into His own almighty hands. Accordingly, we read not only of the Lord amplifying Israel's surprise arrival at Gibeon into a greatly confounding feature of the battle, but we also read of the Lord stirring up a hailstorm and miraculously giving intelligent guidance to the large hailstones so that they struck and killed more Canaanites than the men of Israel did in their attack,



while not one Israelite appears to have been hit, let alone killed, by a single hailstone. If we trust and obey our Lord, we shall find Him to be the most faithful covenant keeper and almighty helper.

Friday, April 13th - Joshua 10: 12-15

As great as was Israel's victory over the five-kingdom coalition of Canaanites, Joshua requested more from the Lord. As grateful as the leader of the covenant nation was for the Lord enabling them to prevail over their enemies as well as for the Lord's miraculous expansion of Israel's victory through the hailstorm, Joshua sought to lead Israel as super-conquerors over their foes. Therefore, Joshua asked and received from the Lord a halting of the sun's course so that the prolonged daylight might facilitate the completion of Israel's total victory. There is nothing too great for us to ask and expect to receive from our Lord so long as what we ask serves to manifest His glory and serve for the good of His people.

Saturday, April 14th – Joshua 10: 12-15

By the Lord hearing and granting Joshua's request, Israel knew once again that their victory was a fruit of God's grace and power. The enemies of Israel also knew that the God of Israel had devoted all who resisted Israel in Canaan to destruction. Why would any resist the God of grace who saves all who surrender to Him? Yet, it is of the essence of the mystery of iniquity that so many sinners do resist and rise up against the Lord and His Anointed Savior (Ps. 2).

Sunday, April 15th - Joshua 10: 12-15

The prolonged day was, as the parting of the Jordan and the fall of Jericho's walls had been, another of the wonders of God. Yet the question is whether the Lord wrought a subjective miracle within the Israelites, or an objective miracle with the sun and earth. The words of Joshua spoken in vv.12,13 are set in poetic form. We find such non-literal representations rather frequently in Scripture. David speaks of the Lord drawing him out of many waters (Ps. 18:16), while Deborah, the judge, sings of the stars fighting from heaven (Jud. 5:20). Both of these instances are to be understood as non-literal imagery. Therefore, if we are to understand these verses in Joshua non-literally, what the Lord did in answer to Joshua's prayer was further to quicken His people as He had done in their rapid march from Gilgal to Gibeon (Josh. 10:9), thereby enabling them to labor so energetically and effectively that they accomplished two days of work in the course of one day. This would be the one day being reckoned as a thousand years phenomenon, when time seems to expand. Medical studies have indicated that in times of crisis the processing time of our brains increases two to three times, giving the one in the crisis a sense of slowed time passage and, mercifully, the ability better to think and react effectively in the crisis. This is a wonderful phenomenon showing that the Lord has fearfully and wonderfully made us. It is possible that in this way the Israelites avenged themselves of their enemies.

Monday, April 16th - Joshua 10: 12-15

While this passage may represent a subjective working of God in His people, the language throughout resounds with a sense of marvel over a vast objective miracle. Astronaut Harold Hill while doing research for the American Space Program discovered two time anomalies in ancient history. One was 23 hours and 20 minutes and the other was 40 minutes. These extra and, in terms of physics, unaccounted for, segments of time correlate with the very long day here recounted in Joshua and with the briefer reversal of the sun's course recorded in the sign Isaiah asked the Lord to grant to Hezekiah in 2 Kings 20:10. As for such objections as those saying that the stopping of the earth's revolving and/or the movement of the sun would result in catastrophic cosmic events, we must recall that God is the maker and governor of all phenomena, and that what men call the laws of nature are but the results of finite and fallible human observation of perceived regularity in the cosmos. The Lord, the Creator and Sustainer of all reality, can work with, without, or above the natural forces He has called into being from nothing. Surely our Lord is far greater than we know!

Tuesday, April 17th - Joshua 10: 12-15

Whether the Lord worked subjectively or objectively or in both ways to enable His people to be more than conquerors over their enemies, it is clear that a massive and unique miracle was performed by God. That is a marvel we accept and rejoice over. However, Scripture makes much over the fact that the Lord did this in answer to Joshua's prayer. He who answered the cry of the cunning Gibeonites with total commitment very likely reckoned that if he, a sinful man, had been so generous, much more could he and Israel call upon their Lord to do lavishly great things for them with confidence that He would hear and answer for the sake of His own glory and for the good of His people. Let us not be afraid to ask and humbly expect great things from our Lord.

Wednesday, April 18th - Joshua 10: 15

Joshua and Israel's fighting men, after their engagement with the five Canaanite kings, returned to their camp at Gilgal. The Israelites were therefore back at their camp, east of Jericho on the west bank of the Jordan River. It was at that camp that the Gibeonites had visited Joshua and cunningly attained their covenant of peace with Israel (Josh. 9:6). It was from that camp that the Israelites had set out for what was potentially a costly and dangerous mission to rescue the Gibeonites, simply because Israel had sworn to them in the name of the Lord. It seemed that Israel had nothing to gain and much to lose by this venture. However, what Israel had accomplished by this expedition was the destruction of the armies of five southern Canaanite kingdoms, leaving all of the cities of those kingdoms to be easy targets for Israel's further conquest. See what great gain the Lord had made of the initial loss Israel had

incurred from her inconsiderate making of a covenant with Gibeon. We serve a God who can and does transform even our sinful falls into magnificent blessing.

Thursday, April 19th - Joshua 10: 15

After Israel's astonishing victory over the Canaanite armies, the Gibeonites must have realized that they had made a greater covenant with Joshua than even they had previously known. The sheer magnitude of the victory of Israel, with its miraculous dimension, must have convinced the people of Gibeon that they were infinitely better off as humble slaves in the commonwealth of such a mighty people as Israel, who were empowered by their almighty God, than they had been as free men vulnerable to the merciless attacks of their wicked neighbors. The Gibeonites saw what they had been saved from: the super-conquering power of Israel backed by the almighty arm of the Lord. They also must have appreciated how blessed they were to have such a mighty nation and its omnipotent God to be for them. We have the same cause to be full of thankful praises (Rom. 8:31).

Friday, April 20th - Joshua 10: 16-19

One Canaanite king had stirred up a coalition that included himself and four other kingdoms. Those five kings had committed their armies to war with a people who had made peace with the people of God. It was the armies of the five Canaanite kings who were the first to pay with their lives for their kings' audacity in their seeking to harm a people whose peace had been pledged to them in the name of the Lord. He who would touch the apple of God's eye will be touched by the consuming and righteous wrath of the Lord.

Saturday, April 21st - Joshua 10: 16-19

Today's reading falls on the day of the birth of Adolph Hitler. He who raised armies to afflict the nations of Europe lived to see his armies destroyed. He who boasted that his Reich would last a thousand years ruled for twelve years, and ended his days as a self-immolated cinder in a Berlin bunker. The Lord has never ceased herding wicked rulers into holding caves that do not keep them safe but rather serve to confine them for the day of their just execution.

Sunday, April 22nd - Joshua 10: 16-19

Although the Canaanite kings' armies were destroyed by Israel, the kings lived on. However, they had been shorn of their effective sovereignty through the destruction of their armies, and they fled the field of battle in defeat and dread to huddle together in a miserable cave. When our Lord breaks for His people the dominion of the flesh, the world, and the devil, whatever remnants of them are left are

vastly more ridiculous than imposing. The fearful flight of these kings foreshadows the vain attempts all of the wicked will make on the final day to hide themselves from the wrath of the Lamb of God (Rev. 6:15-17).

Monday, April 23rd - Joshua 10: 16-19

The kings chose the cave at Makkedah (about 10 miles southwest of Gibeon) as the place of their security. However, they did not and could not have run far enough or hide well enough from Joshua. He who served the God who sees all and knows even the thoughts and intentions of men would not fail to find and deal wisely, effectively, and justly with the fugitive kings. Once located, Joshua ordered that those kings should be sealed in the place of their chosen security, while the fighting men of Israel were to continue their rout of the remnants of those kings' armies. When kingpins of evil fall as prisoners to their fears, we can easily contain them, keeping our focus on our mopping up the remnants of their wicked projects. Accordingly, we are to lay aside the remnants of our sin (Heb. 12:1), while not reviling but simply resisting the impotent attacks of the devil whom Christ has bound (Eph. 6:10-18; Col. 2:15; 1 Pet. 5:8-10; Rev. 20:1-3).

Tuesday, April 24th - Joshua 10: 18, 19

The order that Joshua gave to his main force was to pursue the shattered sword rather than to gloat over the stuttering sovereigns in the cave. The reason was because the fleeing soldiers still had some potential to fight against Israel, and that potential would have been magnified for those soldiers who could reach the fortified cities. Joshua, like our good shepherd, the Lord Jesus, does not always let us lie down when we want to, but rather leads us onward until we enter maximum security at the still waters of His choosing (Ps. 23:2).

Wednesday, April 25th - Joshua 10: 18, 19

Joshua ordered his forces to pursue their enemies. Neither he nor the soldiers of Israel would rest complacently in the miraculous provision of the hailstorm the Lord had brought upon those enemies. When we rightly serve the Lord who calls us to Himself for rest (Mt. 11:28), we shall discover that whatever our hand finds to do we shall do with all of our might (Eccl. 9:10). This is the way it is for those in whom God dwells, as they will and work for His pleasure and by His power (Phil. 2:13; Col. 1:29).

Thursday, April 26th - Joshua 10: 20, 21

We perceive in these verses a principle of good spiritual service. Once the priority assignment is successfully completed, we are then to turn our attention not to idleness but back to secondary

matters. Our Lord calls us to serve Him and He equips us to serve Him in ways great and small, according to His wise and effective direction. Let us therefore neither allow ourselves to be distracted from greater things by lesser things nor, when once we have completed the greater things, allow ourselves to neglect the lesser things.

Friday, April 27th - Joshua 10: 20, 21

Once Israel's pursuit was perfected as far as at that time it could be, the fighting men returned in victorious peace to Joshua at Makkedah, where the five kings were confined and awaiting their just treatment. Scripture notes that at this point no one complained against any of the sons of Israel. This would mean that the Canaanite enemies were silenced, just as Jesus at the end of His earthly ministry silenced His opponents (Mt. 22:41-46, especially v.46). It also implies that the complaints of the people of Israel against their leaders, for their establishment of and costly respect for the covenant they had made with the Gibeonites, were silenced (Josh. 9:18). When the Lord sinlessly overrules even the sins of His people for their good, criticisms without and recriminations within the Church cease. At the day of our final and everlasting victory in Christ, there will be no more curse, no more crying, and no more complaints, but only pure rejoicing in our glorious and everlasting triumph in and reign with our Redeemer (Rev. 21:3,4).

April 2012

Saturday, April 28th - Joshua 10: 22

We should perceive how wisely ordered and efficiently executed were Joshua's directives to Israel. After the Canaanite kings had been sealed in the cave of their chosen but vain security, the remnants of their armies were destroyed by Israel. When that job was completed, Israel returned to deal with the imprisoned kings. Joshua ordered the cave opened neither to grant the captive kings their liberty nor to let them live any longer. Theirs was a release and a resurrection of sorts unto death. Similarly, our heavenly Joshua, Jesus, keeps His enemies and those of His people well under foot until the day of their final judgment and condemnation (Ps. 110:1; Rom. 16:20).

Sunday, April 29th – Joshua 10: 22, 23

Joshua orders the cave opened. His soldiers performed accordingly and brought the five Canaanite kings to Joshua. Those kings neither kept themselves safe in that cave, nor did they escape from it. They could not refuse to come out of the place of their confinement, nor could they successfully resist those who came to bring them out to Joshua. Instead, Joshua and the men of Israel had and effectually exercised every initiative. The people of God may be in the world, but they are neither of the world nor are they

under the power of the worldly. Instead, they are always led by their saving Lord in His triumph as super-conquerors (Rom. 8:31-37; 2 Cor. 2:14).

Monday, April 30th – Joshua 10: 23, 24

The five Canaanite kings had fought against the Gibeonites who had entered into a covenant of peace with Joshua and Israel. They who had ventured to put to death the people who had received a pledge of peace in the name of the Lord, not only found themselves decisively defeated but also fearfully cooped in a cave from which they were brought out so that their remaining lives and deaths would serve to instruct and comfort the people of God while warning the people of the world. Accordingly, the first thing that Joshua does with those kings is to compel them into prostration and to direct the chiefs of Israel's soldiers to put their feet on the necks of the reduced monarchs. This action serves as a sign that the people of the one true God will always triumph over all of their enemies and every challenging situation (Rom. 16:20).

Tuesday, May 1st - Joshua 10: 24, 25

Joshua makes those who had reigned as kings and had fought against the servants of Israel now to be trophies of the accomplished victory of Israel as well as tokens of the continued triumphs of the people of God. To the sign of those kings lying prostrate under the feet of Israel's martial leaders, Joshua adds a word that is both a promise and a sure prophecy. From what the eyes of the people of God could see, Joshua adds words for their ears to hear and their hearts to believe, telling them that this great triumph over not one but five kings who had fought together against them was a pledge of an endless series of victories that the Lord would enable His people to achieve. The Lord tells His people in His Word that His blessed works for and through them always serve as harbingers of more and greater blessing to come to them.

Wednesday, May 2nd - Joshua 10: 25

Joshua issues two commands to the Israelites. The first is negative in which he tells the people of Israel not to fear. This command, given in view of the prostrated kings pinned impotently under the feet of the chiefs of Israel's men of war, indicates that in the future the covenant people would have no more cause to fear any of their enemies than they had cause to fear the kings that lay gasping their last breaths beneath the feet of those who had victoriously led and represented Israel. One thing we who are in Christ never have cause to do is to fear or even to be anxious (Jn. 14:1; 16:33; Phil. 4:6,7; Rev. 1:17).

Thursday, May 3rd - Joshua 10: 25

The second commandment that Joshua gave to the Israelites was positive. He told them not only to cast out the spirit of fear but also to fill their vacated hearts with a spirit of strength and courage lest seven worse spirits come to occupy their hearts (Mt. 12:43-45). The courage they were to have was not only the opposite of the fear they were not to have but it was also the fruit that issued from the strength that would be theirs when they put on the whole armor of God (Eph. 6:10ff). We cannot be strong in the Lord and particularly in the strength of His might and fearful at the same time.

Friday, May 4th - Joshua 10: 25

The two commandments that Joshua gave to Israel were based upon the ultimate cause of the Lord and what He would do for His people just as He had done for them in their latest triumph in a growing list of victories. The promise of the Lord is absolute but it also encompasses the faithful disposition and doings of His people. The indication is that the Lord would, by His Word of instruction and Spirit of empowering, lead and enable His people to will and to do His triumphant will for them (Phil. 2:12,13). Whenever we trust and obey our saving God, our fears are vanquished and we find ourselves empowered to do and emboldened to determine to do His will that is for our highest good.

Saturday, May 5th - Joshua 10: 25

We know from the history of Israel after this point of divine promise that the covenant people did not triumph over all of their enemies. Does this mean that the Lord's promise here through Joshua failed? We may answer on two levels. Regarding the level of Israel's faithful fearlessness and strength, we discover that as the covenant people grew less faithful, so their godly triumphs diminished. We are saved and secured by the power of God operating through our exercise of the faith that He gives to us (1 Pet. 1:5). Let us, then, treasure our faith and use it with growing confidence, diligence, and gratitude.

Sunday, May 6th - Joshua 10: 25

The lapses in the faithfulness of the people of Israel explain the losses the Lord's people experienced throughout the history of the Church—even up to and surely beyond our time. However, on a deeper level, we should perceive that even when we are faithless, the Lord ever remains faithful to us and to His great and precious promises to us (2 Tim. 2:13). The promise the Lord gives to His people in this verse includes but does not depend upon their perfect exercise of faith. The victories the Lord promises to His people depend ultimately on His doing and not on their faithfulness. Here we do well to recall the full wonder of what we should believe and know with certainty about our Lord's doing. Even the lapses of His people's faith and the apparent triumph of their enemies over them the Lord orchestrates for the highest and everlasting good of His people (Rom. 8:28). We need never think or feel that our enemies will lastingly prevail over us (Mic. 7:8). All that they intend for evil against us, even when we are most faithless and least worthy of victories over them, our loving Lord intends and will use for our good.

Monday, May 7th - Joshua 10: 25, 26

The defeated Canaanite kings were not only subdued under the feet of the people of the Lord. Those kings were also put to death by Joshua. They who had been royal masters over many people were not allowed to die of old age. They did not die nobly in battle either. They who had claimed and exercised what they believed to be sovereignty now find themselves accountable to a higher authority and power as represented in Joshua and Israel. Accordingly, they face judgment and are executed as criminals. The kings of the earth who counsel together against the Lord and His anointed Christ do well, along with the people of all nations, to make their peace with the Son of God before His judicial wrath comes upon them and they find themselves consumed by it (Ps. 2:1-3, 10-12).

Tuesday, May 8th - Joshua 10: 25, 26

The kings who had led their armies in battle against Israel had been defeated, imprisoned, then released only to be reduced to the dust under the feet of Israel's leaders, and finally executed. At each stage of the Lord's casting down of these proud men they had nothing to lose but everything to gain had they only humbled themselves and sought to be at peace with Israel and her God. These kings had the example of the Gibeonites to serve as an incentive for their crying out for such mercy. Yet, with adamant refusal and resistance these kings determined to remain foes of Israel and her God. Therefore, they were executed justly and thereby the Lord graciously freed His people from any possibility of those kings ever again attacking them or even annoying them. The Lord's solutions to the problems of His people are always just, gracious, radical, and everlasting. It is, therefore, the sure hope of believers that our weeping will last but a night while our rejoicing will endure forever when our Savior comes to wipe away all of our tears and remove all that is cursedly opposed to us.

Wednesday, May 9th - Joshua 10: 25, 26

These Canaanite kings, who no doubt thought they had power and authority to defeat whomever they chose as their enemies and thereby to enhance if not enrich their reigns, discover that which the rich fool discovered when the Lord spoke to him saying, You fool, this night your soul is required of you. (Lk. 12:20). Not only did the Canaanite kings face this day of reckoning and death, but their eternal condemnation is made evident by the way that Joshua hung their bodies on trees (Dt. 21:23; Gal. 3:13). Even to kings of the earth it is appointed by the God to whom they are accountable that they should die, and afterward face their judgment by the Lord whose grace they had spurned during their



lives and whose people they had consistently opposed. What is true for such kings is also true for all people of the earth (Heb. 9:27).

Thursday, May 10th - Joshua 10: 26, 27

The Law of the Lord directed that an accursed one hung on a tree was to be taken down at sunset (Dt. 21:22,23). Joshua acted in accordance with this divine directive, and did so in order to avoid defiling the Promised Land. The Lord's redeemed people may, by their Lord's leading, signify and cast a shadow of the Lord's holy wrath and just judgments. However, if the righteous overdo what God has directed, they undo their own blessing and bring chastisement upon themselves. Holy and everlasting vengeance belongs only to the Lord and not to any sinful man or people—even the Lord's redeemed people. Therefore, let us not allow the sun to go down even on our sinless anger (Eph. 4:26), lest we defile our hearts and homes and bring divine chastisement upon ourselves and others.

Friday, May 11th - Joshua 10: 26, 27

The Law of the Lord also directed that those accursed ones hung on a tree should be taken down at sunset and buried (Dt. 21:23). Therefore, Joshua does not only take the corpses of the Canaanite kings down from their hanging trees, he also unceremoniously throws their bodies into the cave where the kings had hidden. That cave was sealed and so it became a perpetual tomb for the defeated, dead, and accursed kings. Scripture stresses the truth that it was in that cave that the kings had earlier chosen to hide themselves. Neither the Lord nor men make any person choose the false security that he chooses. Sinners freely, though foolishly, desire and with determination select those things that they believe will protect and please them. However, a day will come when all such sinners will find that their own selections do not save them but rather seal their doom. That is why it is so critical that sinners should come to the Lord through His merciful provision of Christ, and not run from the Lord. No cave of the earth can hide them from the Lord or secure them from His judging hand (Rev. 6:12-17). There is no escape from Him, even in death (Jn. 5:28, 29).

Saturday, May 12th - Joshua 10: 28-39

Despite Israel's prayerless and rash making of a covenant with the people of Gibeon, the Lord graciously and abundantly blessed His people for their keeping of that covenant. The initial cost to Israel for her faithfulness to that covenant was that she was drawn into facing in battle a coalition of five Canaanite kings and their armies. We have seen how the Lord led His people not into an expected costly entanglement but rather into great and glorious victory over enemy armies and their kings. From this victory over the kings and their armies, the Lord leads His people on to multiple and comparatively easy victories over the cities of those kings. Our Lord always leads us from victory to victory (2 Cor. 2:14). He

first breaks the dominion of sin in our lives, then He directs and empowers us to become increasingly victorious over the remnants of our sin (Rom. 6:12-14).

Sunday, May 13th - Joshua 10: 28-39

The cities listed in these verses were all located in the central heart of Canaan. Each city was apparently the capital of a small kingdom. Their conquest by Israel was based on a masterful strategy that enabled her to secure most of the mid-region of Canaan. This securing of such a large and critically located region practically cut Canaan's remaining and weaker southern region off from the stronger region of the north. Accordingly, the Canaanites would have strained, if not broken, lines of communication between their remaining kingdoms, while the Israelites would enjoy compact, strong, and short lines of communication between her forces and her supplying people. Our Lord sees to it that the lines for His people fall not only in pleasant places but also in the most practical places as well (Ps. 16:6).

Monday, May 14th – Joshua 10: 28-39

The victory of Israel over the coalition of five Canaanite kings had the effect not only of rendering the kingdoms of those kings easy targets for Israel's subsequent conquest, but also of weakening the entire region so that those kingdoms still having their kings and armies would not be so formidable in their practical isolation as they would have been in league with those kingdoms whose kings and armies Israel had already destroyed. Consequently, we read of Israel improving her victory over five kings to her complete conquest over and destruction of seven royal cities along with their small but significant kingdoms in this central region of the Promised Land. When the Lord's people trust and obey Him, they are enabled by their God to achieve not only what they may have anticipated, but also more than they would ask or think (Eph. 3:20).

Tuesday, May 15th - Joshua 10: 28-39

These verses present to us a clear pattern of manifold victories. With minor variations, each step that the men of Israel took led them to attack, defeat, and thoroughly destroy their enemies. The strength or weakness of each city's fighting force and defensive placement and capability made little, if any, modification to this pattern of accumulating victories for Israel. It may not be incidental that Scripture records seven specific victories in this passage, indicating to us the perfection of the multiple victories in which the Lord always leads His people (2 Cor 2:14).

Wednesday, May 16th - Joshua 10: 28-39

Joshua and the Israelites defeated and thoroughly destroyed seven city-kingdoms. Two of the seven were without kings because the kings from the cities of Lachish and Eglon had been executed by Joshua at Makkedah, where their bodies lay moldering in the tomb in which Joshua had sealed them. Hebron's king also lay among those corpses, but as we learn from vv.36,37, that city had a replacement king in charge when Israel came to conquer it. The defeat of the two kingless cities, therefore, represented the finishing touches of works that Israel had previously accomplished. The rest of the cities Israel defeated had kings. Presumably, those cities, with Hebron's possible exception, had fresh armies that had not been destroyed in the defeat of the five-kingdom coalition. Whether her foes were spent forces or fresh troops led by their living kings, Israel easily rolled over all of them because, as v.42 reveals to us, the Lord fought for His people. If our God is with and for us, we can have certain confidence that no one or nothing can prevail against us (Rom. 8:31ff).

Thursday, May 17th - Joshua 10: 28

The five defeated Canaanite kings forsook their demolished armies and fled from Israel's fighting men to a cave at Makkedah. There they were captured, executed, and hung on trees, indicating their accursed status. Those kings were not only themselves accursed. They also brought a curse upon the people of Makkedah. No sooner had Joshua sealed the accursed kings in their chosen cave than he turned the power of Israel against Makkedah, whose people, however unintentionally, had offered the feeble refuge of the cave to the accursed kings. Israel completely destroyed every living soul in Makkedah and demolished the city as thoroughly as she had done with accursed Jericho. Bad company not only corrupts good morals but also brings upon all who keep or merely tolerate it whatever just judgment from God will fall upon that bad company.

Friday, May 18th - Joshua 10: 29, 30

Joshua and Israel utterly destroyed Makkedah as they had done with Jericho. However, unlike it was after the Jericho victory, when Israel sent a small portion of her fighting men to attack Ai, here Joshua and all Israel fought and overcame the next kingdom of Libnah. The location of Libnah was about ten miles southwest of Makkedah. Joshua and Israel marched that distance and fought diligently and prevailingly against Libnah. We note that while the Lord gave the city and its king and people into the hands of Israel, Joshua and the men of Israel prevailed not by complacency or indolent presumption but by a faith in their Lord that prompted them to reckon energetically that God was with, for, and in them to will and to do His good pleasure for His glory and their own blessing.

Saturday, May 19th - Joshua 10: 29, 30

We have noted how Joshua took all of Israel's fighting men with him to battle the king and kingdom of Libnah. There is an intriguing hint of the solid unity of this army of Israelites when in v.30 we read that the Lord gave Libnah into the hands of Israel, then tells us that he struck and destroyed it. The singular personal pronoun, he, indicates that the many Israelites fought as one man. Their unity was a fruit of their common faith in their one Lord. Such unity is a hallmark of the Church when her diverse members are sweetly harmonized into a blessed solidarity in the Spirit (Eph. 4:3).

Sunday, May 20th - Joshua 10: 29, 30

The king and kingdom of Libnah fared no better against Israel than did the king and kingdom of Makkedah. Both of these Canaanite kingdoms experienced the same defeat and total destruction that Jericho suffered at Israel's hands. The Lord quickened and empowered His people with a righteous ruthlessness that gave no quarter to their sinful enemies. However, this repeated mention of Jericho should remind us that not all of the people of these Canaanite cities had to be slain. Rahab was living on the doomed wall of Jericho and she, by her faith in the Lord, was saved and also served as a pattern for any others who would cease their fighting against the Lord and His people, and be reconciled to them by faith.

Monday, May 21st - Joshua 10: 31, 32

Joshua and all Israel did not linger in Libnah. So efficient was their fighting and so energized were they in the abounding triumphs their Lord was giving to them that they did not need to take much time to rest and regroup. They passed on from Libnah to Lachish, which was about fifteen miles south of Libnah. Lachish was the city of one of the five kings whom Joshua had executed. Although the city was without its king and most of its fighting men who had been defeated and killed by Israel previously, Joshua did not presume that its conquest would be easy. Accordingly, we read of Israel camping near Lachish before they fought against it. Here is wise consideration in action. After a long march, even spiritually invigorated men would need their rest. After that rest, Israel entered into fighting against Lachish, and the city had enough fight remaining in it that it was not until the second day that Israel prevailed. Wise preparation, diligent engagement, and persevering determination are necessary virtues in the character of God's people. There are times when all of these qualities must be exercised if we are to triumph over our challenges. Even though the Lord gave Lachish into Israel's hands, He also gave Israel the grit to take the gift with their arms.

Tuesday, May 22nd - Joshua 10: 31, 32

The fact that it took Joshua and Israel until the second day to capture Lachish does not indicate any weakening of the power of the Lord, who gave the city into the hands of His people. Instead, we should reckon that our Lord wisely paces the timing and character of His gifts to His people. Perhaps the added exertions in Israel's fighting against Lachish served to strengthen her soldiers' hearts and hands as well as to sharpen their minds better to prepare them for their future labors and ensure the effectual triumphs that would result from those labors.

Wednesday, May 23rd - Joshua 10: 33

So far in the campaign of Israel's conquest of these Canaanite cities, it has been the people of God who have had and taken all the initiative. However, after the relatively more difficult victory Israel achieved over Lachish, another Canaanite king seems to have seized the initiative and came with his army to attack Israel and aid Lachish. There may be cunning in the timing of this reinforcement of the soldiers of Lachish at a time when the battle was wearing on Israel. The wicked will often seek to attack the righteous when the righteous are weak due to their faithful labors. Yet, the Lord sovereignly ordained this complicating challenge to show His people that they never lose their strength and initiative in the Him. Horam, king of Gezer, neither revived the fading fortunes of Lachish, nor brought any real threat of Israel's defeat and destruction. All that the Gezerites succeeded in doing was saving Israel the more than three-mile march to the north of Lachish that would have been required of them had they needed to go to Gezer to destroy its king and kingdom. Our loving Lord excels in transforming complicating challenges that arise against us into convenient blessing that He has brought to us.

Thursday, May 24th - Joshua 10: 33

Horam came with his army to help the men of Lachish in their fight against Israel. But no help would be sufficient to save Lachish or the city's would-be savior from total destruction at the hands of the people whose God was the Lord. Significantly, there is no mention in this verse that the Lord gave the king and people of Gezer into the hands of Joshua and Israel. This omission does not indicate that the Lord did not lead His people in their victory. Instead, it implies the truth that when our faith in the Lord is strong, pure, and mature, we do not grow complacent and forget our Lord but we do grow so confident that He is with us and for us and working through us that we do not need to be constantly reminded of such a glorious truth that we bear vitally and constantly in mind.

Friday, May 25th - Joshua 10: 34, 35

Israel's pattern of victories continues to grow. Joshua and all Israel do not linger at the site of their victory over Lachish, but once more they press on toward their next objective. That objective was Eglon, a city that was about ten miles west southwest of Lachish. Eglon was like Lachish in that both cities had lost their kings and most of their fighting men when Israel had demolished the five-king coalition. However, unlike Lachish, Eglon put up little fight against Israel. The fighting men of Israel, who had been strengthened by their exertions at Lachish, easily captured and faithfully destroyed all who had dwelt in Eglon, living lives there that filled up the measure of their sins until this day of divine judgment came upon them through Joshua and Israel (Gen. 15:16).

Saturday, May 26th - Joshua 10: 36, 37

We have noted how the Lord empowered His servants not magically but rather through His wise and effective measuring out of the exertions He required of Israel in her various conquests. From Makkedah to Eglon Israel faced foes of varying strength. However, all of the cities in that string of victories seem to have been city-kingdoms. The final two objectives in this campaign were true kingdoms, as vv.37,39 indicate by mentioning that both Hebron and Debir had kings along with other cities under their domain. How wise and lovingly considerate our Lord is to train us up through a series of our engaging in lesser challenges before He brings us to face the greater challenges of our lives.

Sunday, May 27th - Joshua 10: 36, 37

No longer do we read of Joshua and Israel passing on from one city to the next. The objective of Hebron required of the Israelites more than their walking on the level coastal plain. Hebron was and still is located at a high elevation on the Judean mountain ridge. In addition, we read of Hebron having a king and ruling over other cities. We read of Hebron's king having been executed previously by Joshua (Josh. 10:23ff). While Joshua and Israel were conquering the five cities listed in vv.28-35, a period of time that would have taken weeks if not months (not for Israel to march between those cities but rather for Israel utterly to destroy all of the inhabitants and demolish all of the buildings of each one) the people of Hebron had selected another king and no doubt were replenishing their army. However, we read in these verses that Israel's pattern of complete victory continued, even over the elevated and more extensive kingdom of Hebron. If God is for us, who or what can stand against us (Rom. 8:31)?

(These Notes have been revised from Notes first published August/September 1991)

Monday, May 28th - Proverbs 21: 1,2

We naturally think in self-approving terms. But sin so distorts our hearts that we not only seek to deceive others, but actually do deceive ourselves (Jer. 17:9). The Lord sees through all deceptive devices (Heb. 4:12,13), and his analysis of our hearts is perfectly true. How wonderful it is when He gives us a new heart in Christ (Ezek. 36:26,27), one which is responsive to the promptings of His grace. Yet whether by grace or by wise and just power, the Lord controls all men's hearts. Not that He interferes with the spontaneous flow of their thoughts, but by His inscrutable wisdom He so arranges all things that all men—from seemingly sovereign kings to the lowliest of slaves—freely choose and act according to His will and for His glory (Jn. 19:10,11).

Tuesday, May 29th - Proverbs 21: 30,31

Since God knows and sovereignly rules over all things, including men's hearts (v.1), it behooves us to submit to and work with the Lord, not against Him. No plans, however carefully and secretly designed, can prevail against Him, nor can any instruments serving in the execution of those plans overcome Him. Consequently, if God is for us, and we live and serve for Him, nothing and no one can prevail against us, either (Rom. 8:31ff), for the Lord will bless our plans, preparations, and actions.

Wednesday, May 30th - Proverbs 21: 3,27

The external disciplines of religion are good because they have been instituted by God. But they are subject to abuse. A wicked hypocrite may superstitiously attend the means of grace, thinking that outward performance is sufficient. There are even those who compound their guilt by intentionally indulging their wickedness even as they go through the motions of worship. Against such hypocrisy our Lord speaks clearly in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. chs. 5-7, especially ch. 6). We are called by Christ to do righteous and loving deeds as the fruit issuing from our worship in spirit and truth, not to perform religious shows (Jas. 2:14-26).

Thursday, May 31st - Proverbs 21: 4,24

The Christian is told to let the light of Christ within shine forth (Mt. 5:16). Such light as holy confidence, based on a clear conscience before God, shone forth, for example, from the disciples after Pentecost (Acts 4:13). The proud seek to imitate such glory. Yet their lamp shines with an eerie black light. Men see that light, too, so clearly that they designate it by accurate names. Let us avoid earning a reputation for pride. This we shall do by our cultivating humility in attitude and action.

Friday, June 1st - Proverbs 21: 5-8

The plans of the diligent certainly succeed because the diligent man exerts himself humbly to seek counsel, and he is willing to bear the cost inherent in achieving his aim. He acts in a straightforward manner, for his heart is pure, thus prompting him to avoid diverse short cuts that lead nowhere. Those not motivated by godly diligence will try such deceitful byways. They will cheat in terms of time, substituting rashness for prudence and patience; in terms of veracity, employing convenient lies at the expense of truth; and in terms of justice, resorting to violent coercion instead of reasonable persuasion. Their cheating twists their path and results not in success but in bitter defeat and death.

Saturday, June 2nd - Proverbs 21: 9,19

A bad marriage makes life a living hell. Here the wife is shown to have power so to ruin the home. But if she who is the weaker vessel can do this, obviously the head of the family can do so to even greater degree. Those considering marriage do well to take sober warning and to make certain that any contemplated match is made by the Lord. Those who are married should seek the Lord's enlightening and enabling grace so that they may work on their marriage to keep it good if it is so, and to make it good if it has gone bad. Study Eph. 5:21ff and Col. 3:17ff to this end.

Sunday, June 3rd - Proverbs 21: 10

The wicked not only do evil, but they desire it. Their depraved appetite prevents them from exercising any charity towards others. They are so taken up with the pursuit of their own lusts that they neglect others, even close friends, neighbors, and family members. Also, their wicked hearts color their perspective so that they conceive all others to be as evil as they know themselves to be, and so deem them to be undeserving of any favor which they at any rate are unwilling to grant. Let us hate such wicked smallness, and cultivate, instead, an appetite for righteousness that will incline us to be charitable.

Monday, June 4th - Proverbs 21: 11,15

Evil desire shrivels a heart so that it becomes increasingly disinclined to do good for others. Such destructive evil is deserving of destruction itself, and workers of iniquity know this. Thus they shudder to contemplate the coming of righteous judgments. Yet such judgments only destroy destroyers, and accomplish much good as a result. The righteous are vindicated and liberated from evil influence thereby, and thus they rejoice. Furthermore, simple souls learn to seek wisdom, which is fed on the instruction of truth, when they see wicked scoffers receiving their just rewards.

Tuesday, June 5th - Proverbs 21: 12



The wicked may construct a house, a fortress, a civil or corporate empire, but no amount of outward protection can secure him from the Righteous Judge, whose omniscient gaze pierces to the heart, bringing to judgment and condemnation the sin embraced therein.

Wednesday, June 6th - Proverbs 21: 13,14

A man who refuses to give to those in legitimate need often does so because he desires to put his money to other uses, which, upon close examination, turn out to be illicit uses. Buying off one's enemies is an example of such an illicit use of money. Bribery degrades the giver and corrupts the receiver, while the poor go neglected in the bargain. Such withholders of charity and givers of bribes set themselves up for a great fall. Enemies are bought off only as long as the money holds out; once the cash is exhausted, the threat remains with no friend available to help—the worst form of poverty.

Thursday, June 7th - Proverbs 21: 16,21

It is not only conscious disobedience that ruins a life. Negligence of our duty to grow in grace and knowledge will cause us to wander into deadly paths (Heb. 2:1-3). Yet when we focus upon and pursue with all of our energies the righteousness and covenant love of the Lord, we receive more than we sought. We receive the things we were seeking and all things to sustain a worthy, abundant, and joyous life besides.

Friday, June 8th - Proverbs 21: 17,20,25,26

The one who makes personal pleasure his goal and his god finds that lasting pleasure ever eludes him. We are to aim higher in our pursuit. The one who seeks first the Lord's kingdom and righteousness—with all of their inherent pain, cost, and mortification of the flesh—receives as a gift of God's grace that which he seeks, and much more besides. Such seekers of God are motivated and maintained by true wisdom, which enables them not only to contain rather than waste lesser blessings, but also to share them generously with others. Hedonists and sluggards do not seek such lasting, ample blessing, nor can they contain those gifts of common grace which do come their way.

Saturday, June 9th - Proverbs 21: 18

This verse is very similar to Prov. 11:8. The Lord will not allow the wicked indefinitely to succeed in their machinations against the righteous. Sometimes very dramatically God works in such a way that what the wicked designed for the destruction of the godly rebounds upon the heads of the wicked, while serving to promote the righteous. Recall, again, Haman and Mordecai (Esther 5-7). Let us then learn to cultivate

trust in the Lord, who causes things to work in this way, and not concern ourselves unduly with the treachery of the wicked.

Sunday, June 10th - Proverbs 21: 22, 29

The wicked are more subtle than strong. They boast in an effort to bluff. They concentrate on projecting an image of strength, knowing that they are inherently weak, and hoping that their bravado will affect others whom they calculate to be as image conscious as they themselves are. But the righteous are concerned with the heart, with being strong in the Lord, not just appearing strong. Thus, while the righteous may appear weak outwardly (meekness is often mistaken for weakness), inwardly they are as strong and bold as lions. When called to exert themselves, they succeed in the most challenging of endeavors, not least being the calling of the bluffs of the wicked.

Monday, June 11th - Proverbs 21: 23,28

Because our hearts are tainted with sin, we do well always to weigh our words before we issue them. We are all tempted and naturally inclined to speak so as to present ourselves and our friends in fairer colors than may be deserved. But such distortions harm others, and ultimately are self-destructive. Thus we all do well to speak less, and more guardedly, while listening more to the truth, which to speak secures the lives and liberty of ourselves and others.

Tuesday, June 12th - Proverbs 22: 1,4,11

Riches can purchase only flatterers, not friends, and certainly not the friendship of a king or any other noble character who has no need of our money. Godly character, which manifests itself through humility and is sustained by godly reverence (v.4), yields good repute (v.1) and great friends (v.11). These blessings, as well as lesser ones such as material abundance (v.4b), are exceedingly valuable since they pertain to who we are rather than to what we have. We may lose our possessions, and if men speak well of us and are drawn to us because of them, their favor will cease when the cash is gone. But character is never lost, and so the blessings arising from it remain with us.

Wednesday, June 13th - Proverbs 22: 2,7,9,16

Economic differences exist in our world. Fallen man seeks to widen those differences, as the rich oppress the poor and the poor envy the rich. But such efforts to exaggerate social and economic distinctions are wrong and are accordingly doomed. The gospel teaches us that what we have in common in Christ is far greater than our distinctions (Gal. 3: 26-28), and that we should live and work and serve to nurture our unity more than our diversity. Our Savior, who was rich, became poor in order

to make us rich (2 Cor. 8:9). Likewise, we are called and equipped to live generously, giving ourselves and of ourselves to our fellow man, especially to those in the household of faith.

Thursday, June 14th - Proverbs 22: 3,5

Perversity leads not only to occasional defeats due to rashness, but into an unrelenting wilderness of pain and enslavement from which there is no escape. Wisdom leads us responsibly to negotiate challenges. The wise person takes into account not only the obvious factor of doing the right thing, but also considers the place and the time. Doing even right action at the wrong time and in the wrong place can be rash confrontation, which will lead to one being crushed by his challenges. Those who wisely consider their way will pursue paths of righteousness that blessedly lead to felicitous living.

Friday, June 15th - Proverbs 22: 6,15

Biblical training involves a sensitive respect for the true character and capacity of our children, so that we do not either indulge or crush them. Our children will be different, perhaps greatly different, from ourselves. Their intellects, temperaments, endowments, aspirations, and attainments will not be the same as ours. Thus we must help a child find his own way—the way he should go—not our way. But a covenant child's own way is fundamentally a life of walking with and serving the Lord. Thus parents are charged with the responsibility and given the authority to distinguish the life-destroying accretions of sin from the child's truest and best self, and to drive out the former while cultivating the latter. It is a process costly to child and parent, but one which godly love will undertake with sure hopes of success.

Saturday, June 16th - Proverbs 22: 8,12

Sin promises the easy and successful way. Men are thus led to think that they can lie, cheat, steal, and oppress others—all in pursuit of adopted goals. God's Word warns us that sinful courses never succeed. Iniquity never bears substantial fruit. The ruthless, unscrupulous, and seemingly powerful methods employed by the wicked disintegrate. This is so because sin is inherently self-destructive, and also because the world is governed by a good and just God who will not countenance iniquity. The Lord crushes the words and works of the wicked, and preserves and promotes His liberating truth and knowledge.

Sunday, June 17th - Proverbs 22: 10

There are many Christians who fail to understand the mutually exclusive natures of good and evil. Such believers naively think that dialogue will resolve all strife. Yet the Word of God tells us to discern evil, to take it seriously, and to deal with it realistically and ruthlessly. When a man proves himself a scoffer, we

are not to negotiate with him. It is not dialogue with, but driving out of such a person that the Lord prescribes. Nor is this merely an Old Testament principle unconditioned by the cross. Jesus expects His people to recognize dogs and swine, relating to them accordingly (Mt. 7:6), and His apostles instruct us to shun committed troublemakers (Rom. 16:17,18).

Monday, June 18th - Proverbs 22: 13

Sluggards create nothing better than lame excuses for their lack of productivity. They have not even the integrity to confess their indolence, honestly proclaiming their refusal to work. Thus they lie in addition to their being lazy. They would have us believe that they would work if there were no obstacles. But true work entails successfully laboring around or through obstacles. Thus, whether the lion is real or imaginary, the Bible teaches us to despise such excuses, and by faith to do exploits for God. David never let a lion stop him from his work (1 Sam. 17:34-36). Should we?

Tuesday, June 19th - Proverbs 22: 14

The words of an adulteress seduce the wayward not to enjoyment, but to destruction. Those who walk in the narrow way, who work out their salvation with fear and trembling, who are about the Lord's business and are consequently blessed and protected by Him, avoid this pit. Yet those whom God gives over judicially to their lusts (Rom. 1:24ff) rush into it. Let us then be diligent to seek the blessing and preservation of the Lord.

Wednesday, June 20th - Proverbs 22: 17-21

Here Solomon reminds us of the sum of the various wise and practical sayings given previously, and urges us to make appropriate personal application. Once again we are told to arrest our natural propensity toward distraction and to train our senses to take in the Word. We are not only to hear it, but also to exert ourselves mentally in order that we may be mastered by the excellent and liberating truths of the Lord. His Word and wisdom are to become second nature to us, dwelling in our hearts and being communicated through our speech. Then and only then does His Word become pleasant to us.

All true wisdom equips us to trust and love and serve the Lord. We learn to understand our world and the people in it through such wisdom. Its highest purpose, however, is not to give us competence in the things of the world, but confidence before the Lord whom we serve and to whom we are accountable.

Thursday, June 21st - Proverbs 22: 22,23

Sin encourages men to exploit the weaknesses of others. The poor and afflicted seem to have no means to defend themselves, and thus provide easy targets for the rapacious. Yet no man can be reduced beyond the infinite reach and almighty help of the Lord. Indeed, those who realize their multifarious

bankruptcy are most likely to call upon the Lord for help, which He graciously gives. Thus we are reminded that not only in our own lives, but in all of our dealings with others—even those with least apparent clout—it is the Lord with whom we have to do.

Friday, June 22nd - Proverbs 22: 24,25

In v. 10 we were told to deal realistically and ruthlessly with evil, and the lesson is similar in these verses. We are not only to drive out a scoffer, but also to shun the angry, pugnacious man. He who deals with people and problems by lashing out at them sets a bad example. He does not cultivate such virtues as wisdom, patience, and forbearance, but relies upon his own aggression. Such bad company will inevitably corrupt others. Our calling is rather to cultivate friendships with the Prince of Peace and His devoted children.

Saturday, June 23rd - Proverbs 22: 26,27

Once more we are warned against extending ourselves beyond due limits. We are called and equipped as Christians to be generous. But there are limits to what each one has to give. Such limits are set by the wisdom of God. Not everyone is a ten talent or even a five-talent person. When we seek to commit ourselves beyond our true abilities, we set up ourselves and those relying upon us for bondage and disappointment. If the sluggard is condemned for attempting too little, here is the balancing warning against our attempting too much. The proud or overly deferring man will never say no. The humble will decline to commit himself when he determines that it would be presumptuous to do so.

Sunday, June 24th - Proverbs 22: 28

In vv. 26,27 we are warned against giving more than we have to give. In this verse we are forbidden to take more than what is rightfully ours. We are to respect the private property, and, indeed, the privacy of others. It is not for us to exalt ourselves or expand our possessions by diminishing them. It is not only our fathers who wisely set such boundaries, but above them, our heavenly Father, from whom we do not earn our possessions, but rather receive them as gracious gifts, for which we should be thankful and with which we should be content.

Monday, June 25th - Proverbs 22: 29

He who is faithful in little things, who works diligently, efficiently, and whose products are of excellent quality, will be promoted eventually to working on greater things and for greater masters. Such promotion comes in the Lord's timing, and the way to it may lead through many deaths and disappointments. But here we have a promise of God to be grasped by faith. Thus, let us not concern

ourselves with whether men see and appreciate our work. Instead, let us work skillfully for the glory of our God, the King of kings, who will not suffer His diligent servants to remain hidden forever.

Tuesday, June 26th - Proverbs 23: 1-3

We are not only to be considerate of how our Christian liberty affects the weaker brethren (1 Cor. 8:9), but we are to consider the impression our behavior makes on our superiors, even, and perhaps especially, if those over us in the civil or work spheres are unbelievers. A worldly ruler knows from experience the emptiness of mere material things. When he beholds a believer gobbling up his delicacies, he will likely be confirmed in his thinking that as empty as material things may be, there is really nothing better to be had. Thus he continues to be nourished on the deceptive food of this world, and by our demonstration of excessive appreciation for his spread, we have served to confirm him in this deception, if not draw ourselves into it. Better to be ruthless with our appetites than so to ruin others and ourselves by indulgence.

Wednesday, June 27th - Proverbs 23: 4,5

We should neither labor nor incessantly plan to labor for mere material riches. If this world is passing away (1 Jn. 2:17), then certainly the means whereby we procure the goods and services of this world are yet less substantial. Additionally, our heavenly Father, who will give us all things necessary when we seek Him first (Mt. 6:33), and who will rebuke the devourer when we trust and serve Him (Mal. 3:11), will lovingly and wisely see to it that anything in excess of what we need and can use responsibly will be devoured. We must use our material things for His glory, not hoard them to our corruption.

June 2012

Thursday, June 28th - Joshua 10: 36, 37

Hebron was, prior to Joshua's day, referred to as Kiriath-arba (Gen. 23:2). There, in the days of Abraham, the sons of Heth dwelt and dealt kindly with the patriarch. They sold Abraham the land containing the cave of Machpelah so that the grieving father of the faithful would have a place to bury his beloved Sarah who had died in Kiriath-arba. Since the days of Abraham, not only had the city name been changed to Hebron, but the relatively good sons of Heth had degenerated into men who no longer sought to bless themselves by their blessing Abraham, but who instead sought to fight against and destroy the children of Abraham. Therefore, they fell under the hand of Joshua and Israel and were

cursed by the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel. Our heavenly Father never ceases to care lovingly for His children, blessing their friends and cursing their enemies.

Friday, June 29th – Joshua 10: 38, 39

After their victory over Hebron, the Israelites fought against and defeated Debir. The city of Debir was about 15 miles southwest of Hebron, which meant that the Israelites had to backtrack somewhat to reach it, for with Hebron they had turned their track eastward. However, this change in direction did not result in any change to Israel's pattern of successful fighting against her enemies. Although Debir was like Hebron had been, a larger kingdom than had been Israel's earlier foes, the covenant people once again treated the king and people of Debir's kingdom to the same total defeat and destruction that had been suffered by those previous foes. Debir was the seventh kingdom to fall before Israel's arms. This seventh Israelite victory marked the perfect completion of Israel's campaign to conquer the heart of Canaan. This result was the fruit of Israel following Joshua as he led them to do all that the Lord their God had commanded them to do. No less will our Lord bless our faithful obedience to His whole counsel with manifold victories over all of our challenges and enemies.

Saturday, June 30th - Joshua 10: 40, 41

These verses briefly recount the sweep Joshua led Israel to make of the southern portion of Canaan. Once the central heart had been cleared of all the Canaanite kings, kingdoms, and cities, Joshua led Israel to make the same sort of thorough conquest of the less populated southern desert region. The language of v.40 is emphatic, stressing how completely Joshua and Israel struck their enemies. Not only are we told that Joshua targeted all of the land in this southern region, but also we are informed that every portion of that entire region was conquered by Israel: hills, lowlands, slopes—no area escaped from the sword of the Lord's people. Nor did Joshua but lightly touch every area and all the cities of this southern region termed the Negev. No survivor was left among all the Canaanites who were living there. Such thorough execution of a people may seem ruthless and appalling until we are reminded that all of this was done in strict accordance with the Lord, who used His people to show all people in all places a glimpse of the final judgment that awaits all people in every age who do not make peace with God through His Son, the Lamb who takes away all sin and condemnation for all who call upon Him for salvation (Rev. 6:12-17; Rev. 18).

Sunday, July 1st - Joshua 10: 40, 41

The slaughter of all the Canaanites dwelling in the central and southern portions of the land was not the act of ruthless invaders but was the action of a people reclaiming their divine gift. That this reclaiming cost so many lives foreshadows the cost of redemption for the Lord's people. As thorough as was this exercise of God's just judgment upon a people whose sins had reached their fullest measure (Gen.

15:12-16), this slaughter was but a faint demonstration of the infinite cost that the Son of God would bear as the substitute for His sinful people. He who knew no sin would become sin and die a death of infinite and eternal magnitude for His people so that they could dwell at peace and in loving security with God in His glory of which Canaan was but a token.

Monday, July 2nd - Joshua 10: 40, 41

Special mention is made of Kadesh-barnea in v.41. That was the place where Israel had been led by God through Moses to enter the Promised Land (Num. 13,14, especially 13:26). Yet at that place, Israel had refused to enter the land as she fearfully regarded the bad report of the ten faithless spies who had seen giants in the land. How healing it must have been to Joshua's heart to stand at last as more than a conqueror in the place where Israel had some 40 years earlier rejected the faithful report that he and Caleb had brought, telling Israel that the Lord who had promised them the land was more powerful than the giants living in the land. Joshua, by 40 years of faithful waiting and now by his faithful and diligent fighting, was at last where he knew His God, whom he by faith followed fully, had promised to bring him. Let us, therefore, never doubt that the great and precious promises of the Lord will be fulfilled for us, even when they appear to be put to death and buried for many years.

Tuesday, July 3rd - Joshua 10: 40, 41

From the mention of the original gateway into Canaan at Kadesh-barnea, we are further told how Joshua's conquests reached as far west as to Gaza, a very ancient city situated on the Mediterranean Coast. Gaza had close associations with Egypt, from which Joshua and his brethren had been released from their miserable bondage by the Lord working through Moses. Now the places of previous suffering and failure shine in the light of the faithful victories of the Lord's people. How delightful will appear to us all things when we see even the places of our earthly suffering in the light of Christ's glorious triumph for us!

Wednesday, July 4th - Joshua 10: 40, 41

The Goshen mentioned in v.41 was not the area where Israel had resided in Egypt. Instead, it was a town located in the southern part of the hill country of Canaan (Josh. 15:48-51). North of Goshen was Gibeon, from where the thrust in the central and southern campaign of conquest had begun. Kadesh-barnea and Gaza mark the western extent of this campaign while Goshen and Gibeon mark the eastern extent. Joshua and Israel had conquered a considerable portion of the Promised Land, beginning in less than promising fashion with the complication of Israel's commitment to fight for the Gibeonites who had deceived them. That which our Lord begins for His people, even when such beginnings seem less than perfect, He will always complete and perfect for them (Phil. 1:6).



Thurs, July 5th - Joshua 10: 42, 43

After giving us a summary of the perfect and extensive conquest Joshua and Israel had accomplished with respect to the central and southern portions of Canaan, the writer of this part of Scripture clearly informs us of the ultimate cause of this stunning series of successes. Joshua led the Israelites in this military marvel, but it was the Lord who was the true Captain leading His host to victory (Josh. 5:14,15). Joshua was empowered to accomplish this feat by the almighty hand of the God who had promised Israel the land of Canaan. In v.42 we are given two designations for this divine Captain of Israel's salvation and triumph. The first designation is the Lord. This speaks of the absolute sovereignty and covenant mercy of God manifested for Israel's blessing. The second designation is the God of Israel. This indicates the almighty divine power that had worked for Israel and against her enemies. Not anyone or anything can prevail over those whose God is the Lord (Ps. 33:12).

Friday, July 6th - Joshua 10: 42, 43

We are told in v.43 that at the completion of this campaign of conquest Israel returned to the camp at Gilgal. As Joshua had led the Lord's people into battle, so he led them back to the place of their initial settlement where the wives and children of the fighting men awaited the safe return of their husbands, brothers, and fathers. Nor did Joshua return with a decimated army, battered though victorious. He returned with all Israel, indicating that, contrary to reasonable expectation, the army of Israel suffered few if any casualties in all of its fighting. The returns for so little cost were enormous. Israel had rid the southern half of the Promised Land of all enemies. The covenant people were in secure possession of half of the territory of Canaan. When believers trust and obey the Lord, they will always be led into enriching triumphs (2 Cor. 2:14). If the Lord God of Israel is for us, no one or no thing can stand against us (Rom. 8:31).

Saturday, July 7th - Joshua 11: 1-5

The course of Israel's entrance into Canaan was one in which the covenant people constantly faced opposition from the inhabitants of the land. The course of the Church and of her individual members in the world is similar. It is a way characterized by continual warfare against the remnants of sin within and against wicked men and devils without. The major difference between the fighting of the righteous and that of the wicked is that the righteous are in warfare in which they will always ultimately triumph, whereas the wicked will always ultimately suffer defeat. This is so because the Lord is for the people who are trophies of His saving grace and the children of His love, while He is against all who would harm His beloved people who are the apple of His eye (Zech. 2:8).

Sunday, July 8th - Joshua 11: 1-3

These verses and the remainder of Ch. 11 record for us a summary of Israel's conquest of the northern region of Canaan. As had been the case with the southern campaign, Israel was not proactive but reactive. The covenant people had taken the initiative when they crossed the Jordan and attacked Jericho and Ai. However, their engagement in the southern campaign was spurred by the five Canaanite kings taking the initiative and attacking the Gibeonites, with whom Joshua had made a covenant. Similarly, the northern campaign begins with another coalition of Canaanite kings rising up together to fight against Israel. Should we fault Israel for showing so little initiative? The Lord is the Shepherd of His Church in every age (Ps. 23). At times He leads her to refreshing waters, and the obedience of His sheep then appears to be their active initiation. At other times He makes His people to lie down in nourishing pastures. Then the sheep appear passive and lacking initiative. The point is that we cannot assert that any one tactic is always superior for believers to employ as they work out their salvation. Our calling and highest wisdom are not for us to know the best way to act in all situations, but it is rather that we come to know ever better the Shepherd of our souls and allow Him to lead us in the way, whether it be our running the race set before us (Heb. 12:1,2), or our standing fast in an evil day (Eph. 6:10ff).

Monday, July 9th - Joshua 11: 1-3

The northern campaign for Israel was actually ignited by the reports of Israel's string of stunning victories in the south of Canaan. One man gave special attention to such reports: Jabin, king of Hazor. Scholars do not know precisely where ancient Hazor or most of the other cities listed in these verses were located. What we do know is that Jabin was the supreme king, ruling over all of the northern kingdoms (v.10). When we let the light of our godly deeds shine before men, some will see and be moved to glorify our heavenly Father. However, others, some of whom may wield considerable earthly power, will see and determine to put out the new light and life within us. We must, therefore, be prepared to suffer for our faith in and obedience to our Lord, and not be surprised when onslaughts of evil come upon us (1 Pet. 4:12-14).

Tuesday, July 10th - Joshua 11: 1-3

Jabin reigned over a large region with numerous kings and people subject to him whom he employed as a united force against Israel. When we consider the challenge Jabin posed to Israel in view of the previous challenges the Lord's people faced, we see a progression from lesser to greater tests. Israel initially faced one city, Jericho, an admittedly strong and fortified obstacle, after which Israel stumbled over Ai then recovered to face a five king coalition. Now the covenant people are confronted with an enemy composed of many kings and their armies. Although her foes arise in ever increasing magnitude, Israel grows ever stronger through her engagement and diligent wrestling with these waves of enemies. Through these progressions we should see the Lord's wisdom and kind consideration in His

allowing His people to grow ever stronger through their exercises with lesser leading on to greater challenges. It was not Israel who chose this course but rather the Lord who set it for His people, all with a view to root and ground them in His lovingkindness and enabling power. Similarly, our Lord sets our course to purify our faith and deepen our love (Heb. 12:1,2).

Wednesday, July 11th - Joshua 11: 1-4

Throughout the entire northern region of Canaan, kings and their armies gathered. There was evidently a total commitment of men and material. All of the kings of all of the peoples of northern Canaan rose above their differences and united against Israel. In v.4 we learn that the armies of this coalition had not only massive numerical superiority but also superiority of weaponry over Israel. However, as the covenant people would demonstrate, greater is He who was with them and for them than were the heavily armed hordes that were arrayed against them. Whenever challenges against us increase, our Lord's grace abounds all the more, enabling us to be more than conquerors over the greatest foes.

Thursday, July 12th - Joshua 11: 1-5

The force gathered against Israel was massive. The Jewish historian, Josephus, estimates the total at 300,000 soldiers. We are informed of the deployment of this overwhelming and superbly equipped force in v.5. The waters of Merom provided the ground of Jabin's choosing. We should conclude that the terrain offered his forces additional advantages. Logically, Israel should have been soundly defeated by such a superior force. Yet, theologically speaking, Israel was not facing her destruction but rather was on the verge of achieving total dominion over her foes. When we choose the one thing necessary to be our good portion, nothing in heaven or earth, time or eternity can prevail against us.

Friday, July 13th – Joshua 11: 4, 5

The object of this massive and magnificently equipped force was Israel. The southern coalition had set sights on the Gibeonites and only incidentally drew Israel into battle. But in the north the enemy aims directly at the covenant people, not merely to defeat them in battle but to annihilate them, just as Israel had done to all of the southern kings and kingdoms. The war between good and evil is ultimately a black flag affair, with no prisoners taken and no survivors escaping. As the puritan John Owen once said: Kill sin before it kills you!

Saturday, July 14th - Joshua 11: 4-6

As Israel marched the approximately 90 miles from Gilgal to the area of Merom, when she drew within striking distance of her enemy it was the first time that Joshua and Israel saw the magnitude of the

challenge they faced. The sight of the Goliath that stood before him inspired fear rather than faith in Joshua. Forty years previously Joshua had faithfully declared with Caleb that the Lord would deliver the giants of the land into Israel's hands, saying to Israel then: do not fear the people of the land, for they shall be our prey. Their protection has been removed from them, and the Lord is with us; do not fear them...(Num. 14:6-9). Now that the great armies of the Canaanites filled his vision, Joshua's faith weakened and his fear strengthened. The Lord deals with this fear in Israel's leader before He empowers His people to prevail over their enemies. The sole divine provision at this point is the Word of the Lord. There are no miracles but only the Lord telling His servant to stop fearing and to be heartened by the Lord's promise that on the following day Israel would prevail over all the forces arrayed against them. The Word of God is the sword that the Spirit uses to strike men frozen in the death-grip of fear to make them alive with faith that enables them to trust and obey the One who has promised to make them more than conquerors.

Sunday, July 15th - Joshua 11: 6

The Lord speaks to Joshua first a word of prohibition, telling him to stop fearing his numerous enemies. Here the Lord ministers fresh comforts that fit the new challenges facing His servant. When the Lord tells Joshua not to fear, the words because of them indicate to Joshua that the Lord has measured and found very wanting the massive armies facing His people. Great fears vanish when our greater God exorcises them and fills our hearts with renewed faith.

Monday, July 16th - Joshua 11: 6

The Lord based His command that prohibited Joshua to fear his numerous enemies on a divine promise. The Lord promised that on the next day He would deliver all of those enemies over to death by the hands of the fighting men of Israel. This promise does not indicate that the Lord would miraculously strike dead the vast Canaanite armies while Israel did nothing. Instead, the promise is that the Lord would empower the trusting and diligently employed arms of the Israelites to prevail over their foes. At any time He chooses, the Lord can require the lives of those who have forfeited them by their rebellion against Him. However, He often determines to quicken His people so that they overcome their enemies. By such enabling the Lord demonstrates to His people that He not only has saved them but that He also exalts them by His working in them (Col. 1:29).

Tuesday, July 17th - Joshua 11: 7, 8

Because Joshua believed the promise of the Lord he shed his fears and set himself and the people he led to act in accordance with such belief. Joshua and Israel came to fight their superior enemy in the place of the enemy's choosing. The word suddenly, in v.7 tells us that Israel acted without hesitation but with eagerness and swift effectiveness by their attacking the Canaanite horde. In battles the advantage is

usually with the defender. It is the wrong tactic for an inferior force to attack one that is superior. However, for those who come to the battle clothed in the name of the Lord and with hearts ablaze with trust in Him, attacking those who stand over them is the right tactic. Whoever or whatever may be against those who are in Christ cannot prevail because greater is He who is for the Christian.

Wednesday, July 18th - Joshua 11: 7, 8

A spiritual dynamic is revealed to us in these verses. The dynamic is that people become what they believe. Those who believe in false gods become like them: lifeless, loveless, powerless. Read Ps. 115:4-8. Those who believe in the Lord become like Him. They live abundant lives and effectively accomplish those good things that their pure hearts and transformed minds conceive and prepare to do (Ps. 115:1-3). In His last public discourse, Jesus said to those who would hear Him: while you have the light, believe in the light, in order that you may become sons of light. (Jn. 12:36). When we believe the great and precious promises of our Lord, we perform in such a way that those promises become actual provision in our lives.

Thursday, July 19th - Joshua 11: 7, 8

The Word of God's promise was not and never is magic, but rather it calls upon the Lord's people to perform feats that could only be accomplished by His enabling power. Therefore we read in v.8 of how the faith of the fighting men of Israel enabled them to fight with a fury that not only defeated their behemoth enemy but also routed him. The superior numbers, arms, and position of the Canaanites were all useless to them against the onslaught of the servants of the Lord. Not even by their flight could the Canaanite survivors escape the wrath of Him who sat on Heaven's throne empowering His servants who did His will on earth as it is done in Heaven. Here we have another token of the final day of the judgment of the Lord (Rev. 6:12-17). It is a gracious comfort to the servants of the Lord and a gracious warning to all who sinfully defy the Lord. Let each one choose whom he will serve: the idols of the vanquished or the God who ever leads His people into victory.

Friday, July 20th - Joshua 11: 9

This verse notes an aspect of the Canaanite coalition that had particularly filled Joshua with fear. The Canaanite horses in the actual battle were rendered impotent; the Canaanite chariots were rendered fuel for consuming fires. Read Isa. 31:1-7 for a vivid vision of how useless are all the idols and implements of the wicked when the Lord arises to call them to His judgment seat.

Saturday, July 21st - Joshua 11: 10

After Joshua had destroyed the body of his enemy, he turns his attention to the destruction of his foe's head. By the reference to Joshua's having turned back we gather that Jabin, king of Hazor, likely fled from the field of battle to what he supposed would be the shelter of his city. If so, his flight from the servants of the omniscient and omnipotent God was in vain. It could also have been the case that Jabin, unlike Joshua, led his armies from behind, pushing and prodding them into mortal combat while he sat at a safe distance. Faithless Saul preferred to sit under trees rather than to lead his soldiers into battle (1 Sam. 22:6). Whatever the case, the head of the godless horde was no match for the head of the covenant nation of the Lord. Our heavenly Joshua has come to destroy the works of the devil (1 Jn. 3:8), and at last He will destroy the devil himself (Rev. 20:7-10).

Sunday, July 22nd - Joshua 11: 10, 11

These verses have a familiar ring. They tell of how Hazor's king, who had raised the gigantic army to fight Israel, and Hazor's people, and the city itself all became a part of the growing pattern of Israel's stunning string of absolute victories. While the wicked and all they have are consumed in fire, the fire of holy zeal for the Lord, burning in the hearts of His faithful people, sustains, empowers, and prompts them from victory to victory.

Monday, July 23rd - Joshua 11: 12-15

These verses summarize the northern campaign that Israel fought against the Canaanites, telling us that Joshua led his brethren to total victory over all of the kings and kingdoms they encountered. The kings were executed, their cities destroyed, and their people put to death. We also learn that, unlike with Jericho, some of the cities were not destroyed and all of the spoil was taken by Israel. Such killing of all the people may seem cruel and such sparing of some cities and all of the spoil may seem selfish, but the truth is that all of this was done in perfect accord with the loving, just, and holy will of the Lord as expressed to Joshua through Moses (Dt. 20:10-18). However unreasonable, unrighteous, or unwarranted the actions of believers may appear to be, if those actions are rightly based upon the Word of God, nothing could be more right and reasonable.

Tuesday, July 24th - Joshua 11: 16, 17

These verses speak of victory that is total in its entirety and in all of its details. By the directives of the Lord grasped by the faith of His servants through which faith they trusted and obeyed their Lord, the Promised Land was swept entirely clean of its sinful inhabitants. Had the sons of Israel sought to infiltrate rather than invade the land, the inhabitants would have at best succeeded in fighting against and killing many of them. At worst the inhabitants would have lured Israel away from the Lord and into their sin. Good, holy, right, wise, and loving are the will and ways of our Lord.

Wednesday, July 25th - Joshua 11: 18-20

We are told in v.18 that the conquest of Canaan took a long time. The account of that conquest we have recorded in chapters 5-11 is brief but sufficient and significant. Yet such brevity might give us the impression that the process of conquest was also brief. In truth, the warfare lasted at least five years as we can determine from our comparing Josh. 14:7 with Josh. 14:10, wherein Caleb gives us some time markers. Our Lord made time in order to use it wisely and effectively. If in one short and explosive miracle God had swept Canaan clean, Israel would not have had time and opportunity to grow strong in faith, in fighting capacity, and in loving gratitude to her God as she was able to do through a protracted campaign. Also, this campaign that was measured out over time allowed the inhabitants of the land to ripen fully in their wickedness or to cry out to the Lord and His people for saving mercy as the Gibeonites had done. God who made time is the Masterful employer of time.

Thursday, July 26th - Joshua 11: 18-20

The command of the Lord given to Moses and through Moses to Joshua and Israel is recorded in Dt. 20. The significant features of that battle operations manual are: 1) In Dt. 20:1-4, an expanded version of Josh. 11:6 is given. The soldiers of Israel were to fear no enemy, for their Lord is greater than all the enemies that would ever come against them. 2) In Dt. 20:10-18 we learn that Israel was to offer terms of surrender to her enemies before she fought them. If the enemies surrendered, they were to be forced labor for the Israelites, as was the case with Gibeon. If the enemies refused to surrender, they were to be dealt with as Joshua dealt with all of the kings, kingdoms, cities, and people of Canaan except for the Gibeonites. This almost universal refusal of the Canaanites to surrender to the people of the Lord shows how completely hardened they all were in their sin—a hardening that the Lord justly ordained not to soften, but rather to use to manifest the glory of His justice while preserving His people from being afflicted and sinfully influenced by the wicked Canaanites. By their sinful refusal of the offered mercy of God each Canaanite killed by Joshua and Israel was not only righteously executed but also committed his own suicide. How terrible is sin! How glorious is the Lord's just dealing with it in those who cleave to it!

Friday, July 27th - Joshua 11: 18-20

The provisions of Dt. 20:10-18 also included the sparing of women, children, and animals among the Canaanite inhabitants (Dt. 20:14). However, this provision was to apply only to, the cities that are very far from you... (Dt. 20:15). In the account of the southern campaign, Israel dwelt in Gilgal which was in that southern region. Accordingly, we read of Joshua leaving no survivor in any of the cities he conquered there (Josh. 10:28-43). The same complete slaughter characterized the northern campaign where there is no mention of Joshua sparing women and children but rather there is explicit mention of

Israel leaving alive no one who breathed (Josh. 11:8,12,14). As far as the kings and kingdoms and cities of Canaan were concerned, the conquest of Israel was complete and thorough, including even the women and children who posed no immediate threat to Israel but who would certainly have posed a future threat to the covenant people. Our God has a holy and loving regard for the present and the future welfare of His beloved children. If our Lord takes such radically righteous measures with even the delicate members of a thoroughly sinful society, then we too should deal with ruthless righteousness in the mortifying of all of our sin, even the seemingly small and harmless ones. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh (Rom. 13:14).

July 2012

Saturday, July 28th - Joshua 11: 21, 22

The last targets for Israel's conquest of Canaan were the Anakim. We learn from Num. 13:27,28,32,33 that the first entrance of Israel into the Promised Land was thwarted by the majority report from the spies that Moses had sent into Canaan. Those spies were especially fearful of the Anakim they then saw, who were part of the Nephilim, a race of giants (Gen. 6:4). The spies, with the exception of Joshua and Caleb, had so fearfully fixated on those giants that they convinced themselves and all of Israel that the covenant people were but puny grasshoppers in comparison with the sons of Anak. However, under Joshua's leadership, with the Israelites' fear vanquished and faith strengthened, the Lord's people crowned their conquest of Canaan by defeating the Anakim as easily as they had overcome the gigantic forces of Jabin, king of Hazor, that had been arrayed with their horses and chariots against them. Our fears always magnify our challenges, while our faith reduces giants to grasshoppers before us.

Sunday, July 29th - Joshua 11: 22

As radical and thorough as the Israelites' conquest of the Promised Land was, it was not a perfect sweeping of all Canaanites from the inheritance of God's people. This verse informs us that most of the giants had been destroyed by Joshua and Israel. Accordingly, the dominion of those giants was reduced to a remnant confined to a narrow coastal strip. In future years, Goliath would arise in Gath to tower over Saul and his soldiers. However, one young man with faith in the Lord would strike that giant down as easily as Joshua and his soldiers defeated the Anakim throughout most of Canaan in their day. Our heavenly Joshua has broken the dominion of our sin, while the remnants remain for us, by faith, to lay aside lest they entangle us (Heb. 12:1,2).

Monday, July 30th – Joshua 11: 23

This verse summarizes the work of Joshua's leadership and Israel's conquest of Canaan under that leadership. Joshua, who believed, trusted in, and obeyed his Lord fully, took not some or even most of



the Promised Land, but rather took all of it. He and Israel did not take the land as ambitious and rapacious conquerors. They did heartily accept the land as a gift from God, who had expressed His holy and gracious will to them in His Word (Dt. 31:1-13). Those who truly hunger and thirst for the Lord's righteous being and gracious giving will be strengthened to be more than conquerors and will be satisfied thoroughly with the fruits of their faithful following of their Lord.

Tues, July 31st - Joshua 11: 23

Joshua took all of the land. Joshua gave all of the land to God's people. Joshua stands before us as the shadow and type of Jesus, who accomplished a triumphant salvation for His people from all of their enemies. Jesus, by His active and passive obedience, earned for us what He gives to us graciously and generously as our inheritance: every spiritual blessing that is even now reserved for us in heaven, of which Canaan is but a type.

Wednesday, August 1st - Joshua 11:23

Joshua gave to Israel victory and an inheritance in the Promised Land. In that victory and the sweet fruit of security that issued from that victory, Joshua gave rest to the Lord's people. The land, too, had rest as the fruit of Joshua's victory. However, that rest was but a token of perfect and perpetual rest. There were in that rest still remnants of Israel's enemies who would be seed for the future production of bitter fruits of sin and death in Israel. Read in Jud. 4:1ff of how a future Jabin, king of Hazor, would arise to afflict Israel. However, this token of rest points to the perfect refreshment and rejoicing that will belong to all of the Lord's people when He calls us to enter into His joy and forever reign with our Christ. Even the earth that now groans under the weight of our sin and God's curse will have refreshing rest then (Rom. 8:18-21; Rev. 21, 22).

Thursday, August 2nd - Joshua 12: 1

This new chapter in Joshua reviews the results of the entire campaign of Israel's conquest of Canaan. It is more than a mere tally of military victories. It serves as a foreshadowing of the redemptive riches that believers have in Christ. Whenever we who have been made partakers of the treasury of salvation decide to count our blessings, the total rises far higher than we had been aware of before the counting began.

Friday, August 3rd - Joshua 12: 1-6

These opening verses recount the conquests of Israel east of the Jordan and prior to the covenant people's entrance into Canaan under Joshua. We read of these victories and their fruitful consequences for Israel in Num. 21. The kings and their armies against whom Israel fought in the territories east of the Jordan served, in the redemptive economy of the Lord, as preparatory agents that exercised the Israelites' faith and fighting arms prior to their entrance into the Promised Land. These preparatory victories for Israel also served as encouraging tokens of the many triumphs that would come as the covenant people trusted and followed their Lord, even and especially when He led them into battle. Our God always accomplishes our good, even in those challenges that arise against us and appear to us as cursed obstacles to our possessing what He has promised us.

Saturday, August 4th - Joshua 12: 1-6

Not only did Israel successfully negotiate the negative challenge of the kings who opposed them prior to their entering Canaan, but there were also positive blessings for Israel that resulted from their victories over Sihon and Og. Through their fighting by the enabling power of their Lord, the Israelites' trust in their God increased and they also gained territory for themselves even before they entered into their inheritance in the Promised Land. The God of peace often sinlessly uses the sinful onslaughts of the wicked to test and strengthen His people through their triumphs over their testing enemies. Our God always makes all of our fightings by faith to be fruitful for us.

Sunday, August 5th - Joshua 12: 1-6

Israel's agenda was to travel from her cursed slavery in Egypt into the blessing of her inheritance in the Promised Land. The quickest and most direct path from Egypt to Canaan was a coastal trade route of about 250 miles, which would have taken Israel less than a month to cover. However, the Lord directed Israel away from that route because it would have obliged His people to pass through Philistine territory and engage an enemy too strong for their newly forming faith at the time of the Exodus (Ex. 13:17). Even when the people of God were led for several weeks to Mt. Sinai (or Mt. Horeb) and thereafter for eleven days to Kadesh-barnea (Dt. 1:2), their fears still prevailed over their faith and they refused to enter Canaan. The encounters Israel had with Sihon and Og occurred near the end of Israel's 40-year wilderness sojourn in which a new and more faithful generation had arisen. Those encounters were great and mortal challenges posed by those two kings and their armies. The point is that we see how the Lord's agenda runs counter to our agenda in that we want the short and easy route into our enjoyment of His great and precious promises while He is committed to stimulating the growth and increasing the purity of our faith. That is why Israel was tested by God in the wilderness—a testing that included their undesirable but ultimately enriching encounters with Sihon and Og. That is why our Lord tests our faith (1 Pet. 1:6-9).

Monday, August 6th - Joshua 12: 2, 3

In Num. 21:21,22 we read of Israel requesting passage through Sihon's territory. Moses gave to Sihon a pledge that the Israelites would neither make any disturbance nor take anything for themselves in his territory as they passed through it. The covenant people sought such passage because it would have enabled them to enter into their own promised territory. Sihon not only refused this courteous request but he also came against Israel with his army to destroy the people of God. Such wicked treatment resulted not in Israel's destruction but rather in Israel's victory and her gaining of the first territory she had possessed since Jacob, more than 400 years previously, had departed from Canaan to live in Egypt. When the worldly attack the covenant people, it invariably results in loss for the worldly and gain for those who are the apple of God's eye (Mt. 5:10-12).

Tuesday, August 7th - Joshua 12: 2, 3

We learn from Num. 21:24-31 that Israel not only defended herself against Sihon's attack but also that the Israelites conquered all of Sihon's territory and dwelt for a time in that territory. The time of their dwelling there was long and significant enough for a proverb celebrating it to have been composed and circulated throughout Israel (Num. 21: 27-30). This would have provided Israel with time to recover from her battle exertions and to refresh herself prior to her future labors on her way to and into Canaan. The territory also would eventually provide a permanent home for two and a half of Israel's tribes. Israel gained so much from her being attacked by the Amorite king, Sihon. Let us learn to look for and expect not only to be preserved by our Lord in our persecutions but also ultimately to profit greatly from those persecutions.

Wednesday, August 8th - Joshua 12: 4, 5

These verses recount Israel's victory over Og, king of Bashan, and her possessing of his territory. We read of this in Num. 21:33-35 and learn from those verses that after a time of the Israelites having dwelt in the Amorites' territory, they turned and went up by the way of Bashan (Num. 21:33). The territory of Sihon lay directly across the Jordan from the heart of Canaan and provided the place from which Joshua and Israel would launch their attack upon Jericho and central Canaan. Why, then, did Moses lead Israel north into Bashan? We read of no direct warrant from God having been given to Moses, nor was there the pressing providential necessity that forced Israel to defend herself as she had done with Sihon's attack. We do not know why Moses took Israel north to Bashan; we do know that the Lord was with and for His people in their northern venture as He had been with and for them ever since they had left

Egypt. Our God, having delivered us from our sin and bondage, pledges never to leave or forsake us but rather to be with us wherever we go (Dt. 31:8; Mt. 28:18-20; Heb. 13:5,6).

Thursday, August 9th - Joshua 4, 5

Whatever may have prompted Moses to lead Israel north into Bashan we learn that the venture involved the Israelites in yet another challenging fight for their lives. The encounter with Og was in some respects a greater challenge for Israel than Sihon had posed for the covenant people. In Num. 21:33 we read of Og going out to attack Israel with all his people. Yet, while there may have been no direct word from the Lord to lead Israel into Bashan, once the covenant people were there and in need of His divine help the Lord gave them all they needed without in any way criticizing them. This surely should encourage us to ask our Lord for help in time of our need, knowing that He will give it abundantly to us.

Friday, August 10th - Joshua 12: 4, 5

These verses inform us that Og ruled over a relatively extensive domain. Therefore, when he came with all his people to fight against the men of Israel, it must have been a fearful prospect for the Israelite soldiers. It certainly was fearful for Moses, and it may have been that his fears were magnified by his thinking that he had led Israel into this great contest without his having received clear word from the Lord to have done so. Yet the Lord calmed the doubts, speculations, and fears of Moses and of Israel when He told them not to fear but to trust His promise that He would deliver these great enemies into their hands (Num. 21:34). Implied in that promise was another divine promise that the Lord would empower His servants to triumph over all of their enemies, just as they had done before with Sihon and his army. In addition, the Lord promised beyond the triumph of His people that they would also attain Bashan as their territory. Finally, when the Lord connects Israel's proven triumph over Sihon with the promise of triumph over Og, He establishes a pattern upon which His people can rely without their being presumptuous. He makes clear to us that same pattern when He tells us in His Word that He will always lead His people in triumph in Christ (2 Cor. 2:14).

Saturday, August 11th - Joshua 12: 4, 5

These verses make clear to the people of God in every age that what their Lord promises, He also provides. What may not be so clear is that the Lord provides better than He promises. When Joshua recounts the actual victory, we learn that while Moses and Israel had feared a great and numerous enemy over whom God promised His people victory, that enemy was even greater than Israel had feared. We know this because Joshua informs us that Og was descended from the Rephaim, a race of giants, as we can gather from our considering the measurements mentioned in relation to him in Dt. 3:11. Our enemies and challenges may be great and even greater than we realize, but infinitely greater

than all of them is our Lord who loves us and promises to make us super-conquerors over all that may arise against us (Rom. 8:37).

Sunday, August 12th - Joshua 12: 6

As Scripture makes clear that Joshua was serving the Lord when he led Israel into her string of conquering victories (Josh. 11:23), so the Word makes clear that Moses was serving the Lord when he led Israel in her conquests over Sihon and Og. Because these two men of God were servants of the Lord, they led the Lord's people in effectively defending themselves against attacks and being triumphant in all of their battles. The result was not only Israel's victory but also her gaining territory that Moses and Joshua did not keep for themselves but gave entirely to the Lord's people. In the same way, our Savior leads us ever in triumphs that redound to His glory but serve for our highest good. Supremely, Jesus was victorious over sin, death, and judgment not for Himself but rather so that we could be freed from those enemies while inheriting heaven and every spiritual blessing to enjoy in heaven's glory forever with Christ.

Monday, August 13th – Joshua 12: 1-6

This recapitulation of Israel's victories and gains prior to her entrance into Canaan shows us these two things: 1. The force of the covenant that the Lord gave to Abraham when He told him that He would bless those who blessed Israel and curse those who sought to curse His people. 2. The demonstration that the Lord turns the persecutions of His people into the profit of His people. Our Lord still sees to it that the world's cursing of and opposition to His people will always result ultimately in the blessing of His people (Phil. 1:28).

Tuesday, August 14th - Joshua 12: 6, 7

These two verses present us with a comparison between the fruits of Moses having led God's people and those of Joshua leading them. Moses, the lawgiver, led Israel to make some conquests and he gave a portion of Israel (the two and a half tribes) a concession to live in the territory east of the Jordan. The conquests and gifts of Joshua, whose name means Savior, were far more extensive and lasting. Moses' conquests also served as preparatory training for the people of Israel prior to their entering into their inheritance. Joshua's conquests led the Israelites' into their actually taking possession of their inheritance. As John writes in his Gospel: the law was given through Moses; grace and truth were

realized through Jesus Christ (Jn. 1:17). The Law is but a tutor to lead us to our full blessing in and through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Wednesday, August 15th - Joshua 12: 7, 8

In vv. 7-24 we are given a summary of Israel's conquests and territorial gains west of the Jordan River and in the Promised Land proper. The trials and triumphs of the Lord's people prior to their entering into the Promised Land served as their training and assuring tokens that prepared them effectively to enter into and securely to enjoy their inheritance in Canaan. In the redemptive economy of our God, this course of the Lord's leading and dealing with His people serves as a token of our earthly pilgrimage wherein we are being tried and prepared for our entrance into eternal glory where we shall reign with our Savior forever. There will be many trials and afflictions in our lives that will not fully make sense to us, and some that will make no sense to us, during our pilgrimage. Yet, when we enter our eternal inheritance we shall know and rejoice in the eternal weight of glory that has been prepared in and for us by our earthly momentary light afflictions (2 Cor. 4:16-18).

Thursday, August 16th - Joshua 12: 7, 8

The first thing listed in this summary of the extent of Israel's conquest of the Promised Land is a sketch of the boundaries of the territory that Israel had conquered. Those boundaries reached as far north as Lebanon and as far south as Mount Halak, a point well south of the southern shore of the Dead Sea. The Jordan River marked Israel's eastern boundary while the Mediterranean bounded Israel in the west. This was a territory large and varied enough to accommodate Israel throughout her history. The gifts of the Lord are perfectly suited for His people.

Friday, August 17th - Joshua 12: 7, 8

In addition to a sketch of Israel's boundaries these verses inform us of the rich topographical variations within the land, including highlands, lowlands, desert, rivers, and coastal plain. All who have ever seen the land of Israel see it as a land of compact and greatly varied components that serve to interest and intrigue those who live there. If this token of heaven was packed with such varied delights for the people of Israel, how much more will it be the case that we shall find heaven to be a place that continually captivates us with diverse delights?

Saturday, August 18th - Joshua 12: 7, 8

The final feature noted in this summary of Israel's conquest of Canaan is a catalog of the various peoples whom Israel conquered. These peoples varied in their cultures and often fought among themselves, but

they were united in their godless opposition to the children of the Lord's covenant and they were united in the defeat, destruction, and cursedness that they experienced from the Lord's judgment served to them by His servants, Moses and Joshua and Israel. All who are not for Christ are against Christ and that fundamental antipathy will be their condemnation.

Sunday, August 19th - Joshua 12: 9-24

These verses summarize Israel's conquest within the Promised Land. The central and southern campaign is tallied in vv.9-18, while the northern victories are set out in vv.19-24. How these distinctive campaigns are recorded for us is significant. The fact that the whole series of Israel's conquests is shown consistently to be comprised of distinct campaigns indicates to us something of the strategy the Lord employs for the blessing and triumph of His people. All is done in an orderly progression. Our Lord edifies His Church by leading her members from victory to victory. It is the devil who tempts us to think that spiritual perfection should take place through one miraculous leap (Mt. 4:5-7). Our God leads us from one test to the next. Our victories come in a succession that is arranged by His wise, loving, and holy intention. We run a race that He sets before us, and we do so a step at a time, with each battle strengthening us for the next and each victory assuring us of the next (Heb. 12:1,2).

Monday, August 20th - Joshua 12: 9-24

It is significant that Israel's conquest of Canaan is summarized as a list of kings. The covenant people fought armies and gained territory, and yet those elements are left implicit in this summary. When Paul characterizes the Christian warfare and armor (Eph. 6:10-20), he tells us specifically and significantly that, our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against rulers, against powers, against the world-forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. (Eph. 6:12). The enemies of the Church are greater and the victories of the Church are more glorious than we, apart from our faith being informed by Scripture, can think or imagine.

Tuesday, August 21st - Joshua 12: 9-24

There are kings listed in these verses that were not mentioned in the more detailed accounts of Israel's victories recorded in chs. 10,11. Specifically, the kings listed in vv.14-18 are not to be found in the account of Israel's central and southern campaign (ch. 10). Nor are the names recorded in vv.19-24 found in the account of Israel's victories in her northern campaign (ch. 11). Most of these thirty-one kings are only mentioned here and nowhere else in Scripture. Apart from this indicating that these kings were perhaps minor powers, it is of greater significance that we understand this arrangement to indicate to us that the struggles and triumphs of the people of God are always greater and more extensive than we realize or have been told, even by the testimony of Scripture. The Word of God gives us glimpses of this, here and in what John writes about Jesus having performed far more works of

compassion and wonder than are recorded in his Gospel or could be contained in all the world (Jn. 20:30,31; 21:25). There is more glory to this great salvation that we have in Christ than we have been told, even by our God. Only in the final day of reckoning will we know its true magnitude.

Wednesday, August 22nd - Joshua 12: 9-24

None of the kings whom Israel overcame are named in this summary list. We read of the office and the territory lost in the defeat of each ruler and gained by Israel due to her victory over each king. Surely this indicates to us the essential insignificance of all who exalt themselves in this world. None of their successes and gains but only all of their failures and losses will endure through time and eternity. God not only says but He also shows in history how He is opposed to the proud and abases them while he favors and exalts the humble.

Thursday, August 23rd - Joshua 12: 9-24

There is another significant omission in these verses. No mention is made of the giant Anakim who figured so greatly in Israel's faithless refusal to enter Canaan at Kadesh-barnea forty years prior to the Israelites' conquest of Canaan under Joshua (Num 13:33). Our foes at times may be large but our fears only magnify them. Our faith, which rightly focuses only on the Lord and His promises and power, not only cuts our enemies and challenges down to size, but shows us how in the light of our spiritual victories our foes will be of no account.

Friday, August 24th - Joshua 12: 9-24

The final total of Israel's victories was thirty-one. Before the march of faith of the people of God, thirty-one kings and kingdoms fell and thirty-one distinct territories were possessed by Israel. The campaign of the covenant people was one that was full, varied, long, and at times costly as the servants and soldiers of the Lord faced, fought, and vanquished all of their foes. No earthly ruler or alliance of kings can overcome the people whose God is the Lord, the King of kings and the Lord of all. For the Lord gives to His people faith whereby they, in union with Him, overcome each and every enemy they will ever face in the whole world (1 Jn. 5:4).

Saturday, August 25th - Joshua 12: 7-24

It was through many and varied trials that Israel entered into her inheritance in the Promised Land. The covenant people trusted their Lord and walked by His direction across a river that was in flood stage, thereafter to walk repeatedly around the fortified city of Jericho, blow horns and march into the exposed city to slay their enemies whose protecting wall had fallen. The Lord's people sinned and



suffered but repented and succeeded in their engagement with Ai. They were foolish more than faithful in their initial dealings with the Gibeonites, but their covenant with them not only saved the people of Gibeon but also launched Israel into an enriching campaign of conquest through central Canaan. Israel then fought the southern campaign wherein the Lord helped them with miraculously guided hailstones that spared the Israelites while killing their enemies. Finally, Israel fought her northern campaign with no recorded miracles but the result of total victory was just the same. Israel, by her following Joshua and trusting in their God reduced many kings to a nameless list while she enriched herself with the gain of the entire land of Canaan. Here is a token and type of the Church of the living God in every age, whose members become super-conquerors and inherit the world by their following Jesus, who always leads them—who always leads us—in victorious gain.

August 2012

Sunday, August 26th - Joshua 13: 1

The first 12 chapters of Joshua record the wars of Israel's conquest of Canaan. From the 13th chapter to the end of Joshua we have an account of the apportioning of Israel's inheritance and her tribes possessing their portions. The Lord, through Joshua, sets and assigns the diverse places where His people would best live and serve and work out their salvation. In the same way our Lord through His providence determines for His glory and our highest good where we live and when and to what degrees we abound or are abased. Whatever our God grants or withholds from us issues from His love and serves our highest good.

Monday, August 27th - Joshua 13: 1

Scripture indicates in this verse that Joshua was old and that the plans and provisions the Lord had in store for His people exceeded the lifespan of His servant who faithfully and fruitfully had succeeded Moses. This speaks to us of the great magnitude of the Lord's provision for His adopted children in this world. The possession and exploration of the treasury of salvation is a work that exceeds the life of any one person or generation. Here in time we have but the pledge of our full salvation (Eph. 1:14), and that pledge has been explored by many generations and still is not exhausted.

Tuesday, August 28th - Joshua 13: 1

We can estimate Joshua's age from the notice of the age of his contemporary, Caleb, given in Josh. 14:10. The wording of this first verse of Josh. 13 indicates that whereas Caleb was still vigorous at 85, Joshua was near to the time of his death. This could mean that he was older than Caleb or that the pressures of leadership had worn on him. The main point is that when Joshua was near the end of his earthly race, his Lord informed him of that fact as well as fact that although His worker would soon die

His work would carry on. It was not callous but instead was compassionate of God to prepare His beloved servant for his imminent death, that would be Joshua's great gain (Phil. 1:21), while at the same time assuring Joshua that the work he had begun would carry to its completion after his death. God is as gracious to us in our dying as He has been gracious to us in our living.

Wednesday, August 29th - Joshua 13: 1

What the Lord states in this verse is not that Joshua could no longer serve Him, but rather that Joshua's service would of necessity shift from his active leading of Israel in her conquest of and settling into the Promised Land to his serving as the one to reveal the Lord's will in the apportionment of the Land and in the assignment of the specific portions to designated tribes. The Christian may continue to find ways to serve his brethren and work for the glory of his Savior even as his own death approaches (Jn. 21:19).

Thursday, August 30th – Joshua 13: 1-7

These verses map out the circumference boundaries for the territory of the nine and a half tribes that would inhabit the Promised Land proper. These lines signify the Lord's allowance and limitation for His people, as well as His set distinction between the tribes of Israel. The abundant goodness of the Lord is indicated by what He tells Joshua in v.1, saying that very much of the land remains to be possessed. Whatever difference there may be between the portions the Lord allots His people, each portion is perfectly suited to its possessor and all portions together are bountiful and beautiful (Ps. 16:5,6).

Friday, August 31st - Joshua 13: 1-7

The vastness of Israel's inheritance in Canaan is apparent when we compare the places listed in this passage with a map of ancient Canaan. The borders of the land for the covenant people extended beyond what they are for the nation of Israel in our day. The Lord's provision for His people in Joshua's day reached north well into Lebanon and south deeply into the Sinai Peninsula. However, the Lord granting an abundant inheritance to His people and their effective possession of all of that inheritance are two very different things. In all of her history, Israel has never possessed and effectively ruled over all of the territory of her God-given inheritance. The closest Israel came to having full possession was in the days of David and Solomon. Those two great kings extended Israel's reach even beyond the limits of the land plotted out in this passage. Yet even in their day Israel proper did not reach to the extent described in this passage, but rather was confined to a smaller area while having governing administration over territories the Israelites occupied but never fully possessed. Whatever we make of the reasons for Israel's failure to possess all of her inheritance, it is clear that our God always gives us more than we can ask or think or fully apprehend.

Saturday, September 1st - Joshua 13: 1-7

The story of the Lord's abundant gift and Israel's failure fully to possess it unfolds not only throughout the remainder of the Book of Joshua but also through the entire Bible and the whole of Church History. It is a story about the triumphs and failures of faith, about the blessings that result from believers cleaving to the Lord and the misery that mounts when they drift from Him. It is the story of God's lavish giving and our imperfect working out of our salvation. These things all occurred in Joshua's time and serve in the record of Scripture for our instruction and edification.

Sunday, September 2nd - Joshua 13: 1-7

As the inheritance the Lord gave His people of Israel exceeded what they ever fully possessed, so the token of our heavenly inheritance will ever exceed what any one Christian or all members of the Church in all the ages of her history will ever fully possess. Great is our Lord's grace. It is greater than all of our need and greater than all we could ever possess here and now in our earthly pilgrimage. Accordingly, we now groan, having the first fruits of the Spirit (Rom. 8:23). But when we enter from great grace into the infinitely greater glory of the Lord, then we shall no longer know and possess in part, but we shall know fully and possess fully not a graciously conferred portion of territory on this cursed earth, but the fullness of all that our heavenly Joshua has prepared for us in His Father's place of glorious dwelling (1 Cor. 13:9-12; Jn. 14:1-3).

Monday, September 3rd - Joshua 13: 1-7

The abundant territory and varied terrain of Israel's inheritance in Canaan was perfectly suited to and necessitated the diversification of the covenant people according to their tribal entities. During the time of Israel's entrance into Canaan and of her breaking the dominion of the Canaanites' confederation, the whole nation of the covenant people lived, moved, and fought together. In her campaign of conquest, the unity of the Israelites was required, stressed, and strengthened. Now that the time had come for the people of God to possess, dwell in, and develop their inheritance, the diversity of the Israelites comes into play as the Lord assigns each tribe its distinctive portion of the Promised Land. Here we see unity and diversity not contending against each other but rather cooperating in a holy and blessed harmony. As our Lord so organized His Church in the days of the older covenant, so He has organized His Church in the economy of the new covenant. Paul writes of the Church as being the body of Christ wherein each member receives grace and spiritual gifts from God to employ for the good of the whole (1 Cor. 12:4-11; Eph. 4:1-16; Phil. 2: 1-4).

Tuesday, September 4th - Joshua 13: 1-7

God did not design that His people should divide the land among themselves. Such division would have implied and resulted in the increasing separation and independence of the tribes from each other. Nor did the Lord require His people to dwell together in a single undifferentiated mass that would have reduced their varying distinctions into a dull uniformity. Instead, God apportions the land, an arrangement that would foster the distinctive development of the individual tribes within their respective portions of the greater whole to which each tribe would contribute its part in a rich national harmony. It is impossible, for us to conceive of a wiser, more practical, and more mutually satisfying arrangement.

Wednesday, September 5th - Joshua 13: 2-4

These verses specify territory beyond what Israel had already conquered. The territory was a southwestern coastal region reaching into the Sinai desert. The Philistines inhabited most of the region while the Geshurites were but a small tribe dwelling in the extreme south of the region. The desert part inhabited by the Geshurites may have seemed negligible to Israel, while the Philistine part held firmly by the five anchors of the cities mentioned in these verses may have seemed unnecessarily difficult for Israel to possess. Yet both parts formed a portion of Israel's inheritance. Things that the Lord's people may deem too small or too great for their attention are not overlooked by the Lord in His perfect provision for His beloved children.

Thursday, September 6th - Joshua 13: 2-4

In these verses the Lord informs Joshua that in addition to the regions Israel had already conquered, the territory of the Philistines was to be considered as part of the Promised Land to be possessed by Israel. The Philistine territory extended southward toward Egypt's border and northward to Ekron. The land was mostly desert inland and its coastal shore on the Mediterranean had only marginally useful harbor cities. The Philistines had conquered this area from the Canaanites and over the years of Israel's history the Philistines would prove stubborn and pestiferous thorns in Israel's side. Recall the afflictions the Philistines brought on Israel in Samuel's day, when they not only still possessed Ashdod but also defeated Israel's army and carried to Ashdod the ark of God (1 Sam. 4,5). Ashkalon was conquered by the men of Judea (Jud. 1: 8,9) but soon thereafter was taken back by the Philistines as were most of the five Philistine cities mentioned in v.3 (1 Sam. 6:17). Why would the Lord give to His people such poor land containing such painfully persistent inhabitants? The answer is that our God uses and causes to work for the ultimate blessing of His people, even such painful thorns as are represented by these Philistines.

Friday, September 7th - Joshua 13: 4-6

After the words, to the south, in the first part of v.4 we find a description of the northern extremity of God's gift to Israel. The region described appears to have been comprised of Phoenicia on the coast and Lebanon's highlands. The land in the region was more desirable than that in the Philistine territory. This northern region boasted better coastal harbors, including Sidon, and rich woodlands that included Lebanon's famous cedars. Yet, had the Lord not directed His people to possess this northern land it may not have occurred to them to do so. Yet it was through this northern neck that all of Israel's invaders would come to attack the Lord's people at various times in their history. Our God always knows best how to secure His people by placing them in positions from which they can better defend themselves from enemies whose attacks may be enshrouded in a future unknown to us but always known by our omniscient God.

Saturday, September 8th - Joshua 13: 6

To His command that Israel should attack and possess these portions of Canaan the Lord also adds the comforting promise that He would be with the sons of Israel so that their efforts would be successful. When we view Israel's occasional successes in driving her enemies from these regions we may wonder about the value of this divine promise. Yet, the Lord makes clear that His promise was dependent upon the faith of Israel in her God and her obedience to His command. Our Lord crowns all of our trusting and obedient steps with success (Josh. 1:8). If we fail to exercise the faith He has given to us, then the Lord corrects us by His allowing our enemies for a time to be thorns in our sides to humble and drive us back to where we trust Him with all our hearts instead of leaning on our understanding and following our passions (Prov. 3:5,6).

Sunday, September 9th - Joshua 13: 7, 8

The territory west of the Jordan River was the inheritance for nine and a half of Israel's tribes. The other two and a half of her tribes had already asked for and received their inheritance on the east side of the Jordan. We have no way of knowing whether the Lord adjusted the borders of the land to accommodate the final settlement of His people on both sides of the Jordan. What we can know is that whatever our Lord allows by His providence is part of His perfect and holy secret will that unfolds in the events of our lives and the provision He makes for us every day. We, as His children, are where we are because of His gracious leading in our lives. That leading takes into account not only His declared will but also the asking that His people do in their praying. The two and a half tribes were where they were because of the Lord's granting of their prayerful petition.

Monday, September 10th - Joshua 13: 8-12

These verses sketch for us the boundaries of the territory the Lord gave to the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of the tribe of Manasseh. To many students of the Bible, it seems that this represents

something other than what would have been God's best for them. The facts that they wanted the land because it seemed to them desirable for their cattle and that Moses was initially strongly opposed to granting their request seem to indicate that their asking was perhaps faithless (Num. 32:1-15). Yet when the men of these tribes made clear that they were committed to crossing the Jordan with their brethren and fighting the Canaanites with their brethren, Moses, by God's authority, granted their request (Num. 32:16-32). Therefore, Scripture clearly represents the territory east of the Jordan as an inheritance of the Lord for the two and a half tribes. Those tribes had fulfilled their fighting obligations that were a condition of their rightly receiving the land they wanted as their inheritance. Hence, they were not second-class members of the covenant nation but lived according to the Lord's grace and godly regulations just as did the nine and a half tribes.

Tuesday, September 11th - Joshua 13: 8-12

The two and a half tribes received land according to their desires that they attained by their asking and by their performing of duties specified by Moses. The boundaries of their territory and the configurations of their individual tribal portions were prescribed by God through Moses. Each tribe also received its particular portion by divine assignment. Accordingly, all of the tribes of Israel by this practical arrangement were taught that they were neither to encroach upon their brethren nor indulge in imperial campaigns against their neighboring nations. God's people are assigned their portions according to the wisdom, love, and gracious generosity of their Lord, and therefore they all had cause to live lives of secure and satisfying contentment whether they abounded or were abased in their divinely assigned circumstances (Phil. 4:11-13).

Wednesday, September 12th - Joshua 13: 14

The entire territory given to the two and a half tribes was spacious beyond what their brethren in the nine and a half tribes had received west of the Jordan. Yet there were considerable portions of the territory east of the Jordan that were desert or mountainous wilderness. There were also sufficient portions of rich pastureland for the bountiful livestock of the two and a half tribes, as well as cities to house the people of these tribes. There is always abundant sufficiency but never indulgent excess in what our Lord provides for His people.

Thursday, September 13th – Joshua 13: 13

Here is the first explicit hint in the Book of Joshua of human failure in the process of the people of Israel possessing their inheritance. Some of those dwelling in the eastern territory of the two and a half tribes were not driven out of the land by the Israelites. Therefore, they remained as spoiling flies in the ointment of the inheritance of the covenant people. We shall see later in Joshua that these residual spoilers were also left throughout the territory of the nine and a half tribes. While the people of Israel

effectively broke the dominion of their enemies, they always had to contend with remnants of the dispossessed people. While we experience liberation from the dominion of our sin, we also must contend with the remnants of our sin that we can, by God's enabling, lay aside but that can also entangle us if we do not mortify them (Rom. 7: Heb. 12:1,2).

Friday, September 14th - Joshua 13: 14

Here is a note regarding the provision the Lord made for the members of the tribe of Levi. Because the Levites were selected by the Lord to be His priests, He made special provision for them (Dt. 18: 1, 2). The Levitical priests would not have to toil to get their food from the earth, but instead would subsist on a portion of the offerings that the Lord's people would make in accordance with the sacrificial system contained in the Book of Leviticus. We shall later in Joshua learn that the Levites would live in various cities sprinkled throughout all of Israel to serve as salt and light to the people who were to be salt and light to the nations. The diverse provisions of the Lord are not defective but issue from design for the good of all of the Lord's people and even for the world.

Saturday, September 15th - Joshua 13: 15-23

From vv.15-31 we are given a description of the specific portions of the territory east of the Jordan given to the two and a half tribes. The internal boundaries of each tribal portion are drawn out while significant indications of the character of each tribal portion are also included. The portion assigned to the tribe of Reuben, the descendants of Israel's first-born son, is described in vv.15-23. The Reubenites were assigned the smallest among the three portions contained in the Trans-Jordanian territory. But their portion contained fertile valleys (v.16) and plains (v.21) with cities (vv.16-21), and, judging by some of the city names, fields and vineyards (vv.17-19). These things the Lord had promised to His people before they entered Canaan (Dt. 6:10-12), and we see how He provides them for His people living just outside of Canaan. The Lord never will leave but ever will provide for His people wherever they go.

Sunday, September 16th - Joshua 13: 15-23

In addition to the rich practical provision the Lord made for the tribe of Reuben, there also were places and actions that had taken place in their territory that spoke timelessly of the actions of God for and with His people. God settled the Reubenites in the land from which He had mightily empowered His people to eject Sihon, king of the Amorites (v.21). It was also within Reuben's inheritance that Balaam, the notorious curser of Israel, was caught and executed along with the Amorites and Midianites he had served (Num. 22-25; 31:8). Therefore, the sons of Reuben not only could feed upon the produce they grew but also could nourish their souls through their reflections upon the way the Lord had preserved His people and punished all of their foes. This would be so especially with their recollection of Balaam,

whose life and death served as an admonition to all who were gifted but whose lack of grace would lead them to pervert their gifts.

Monday, September 17th - Joshua 13: 24-28

These verses sketch the boundaries of the inheritance of the tribe of Gad. The territory was marked off roughly as a rectangle measuring about twenty-five miles (west to east) and sixty miles (south to north). The southwestern boundary was about two miles north of the Dead Sea and ran along the east bank of the Jordan River up to the southern tip of the Sea of Galilee. The land had been part of Sihon's kingdom (the Reubenites having received the other part), and while no mention is made of resources, the cities mentioned surely had been and continued to be supplied by crops grown in fertile and watered fields. The region also had been noted for its grazing land for livestock (Num. 32:1). The region of Gilead was known for its production of healing balm. Therefore, the children of Gad could also rightly say, as could have the Reubenites, that the lines of the Lord's provision had fallen to them in pleasant places. All that the Lord provides for all of His people is abundant in pleasant and practical things (Ps. 16:6).

Tuesday, September 18th - Joshua 13: 29-31

These verses briefly describe the territorial boundaries set by God through Moses for the half tribe of Manasseh that would dwell to the east of the Jordan. As far as discernable resources are concerned, this half tribe received part of the rich region of Gilead as the tribe of Gad had received the other part. To the north of Gilead rose the hills and mountains of Bashan that had belonged to the vanquished king Og. Valuable timber was there (the Oaks of Bashan), so the half-tribe of Manasseh also received a rich and plentiful inheritance. The size of this territory east of the Jordan was roughly twice the size of what the other half tribe of Manasseh inherited west of the Jordan. Yet while the gifts of God are generous we must also recognize that they are equitable and perfectly suited to serve for the highest good of those possessing them.

Wednesday, September 19th - Joshua 13: 29-31

Originally, it was only the sons of the tribes of Reuben and Gad who sought from Moses permission to settle east of the Jordan (Num. 32: 1,2). Yet at some point between those two tribes asking and Moses granting the request, half of the tribe of Manasseh sought to separate from their nearer brethren and dwell with the Trans-Jordanian tribes (Num. 32:33). Scripture neither gives explanation for nor is critical



of this split of the tribe of Manasseh. We simply are told that Moses granted and regulated the request of these two and a half tribes. More often than we may suppose, the Lord gives us the desires of our hearts. Let us learn to train our desires in the ways of righteousness and love for our brethren lest we ask for and receive our portion of an inheritance that we will squander because of our unholy and unloving desires.

Thursday, September 20th - Joshua 13: 29-31

In v.31 the tribe of Manasseh is referred to as, the sons of Machir, the son of Manasseh. Scripture frequently associates Manasseh with his son, Machir (Gen. 50:23; Num. 26:29; 32: 39,40; Dt. 3: 15). Perhaps it is because Manasseh, Joseph's first-born son, did not receive the primary blessing from Israel when he adopted and blessed Joseph's two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim (Gen. 48:8-20). Additionally, Manasseh had only one son, who was Machir (Num. 26:29-34). All of Manasseh's descendants issued from his only son. Accordingly, we are perhaps given a hint at how the Lord compensates for what he takes away from some of his people. There was likely a special bond between Manasseh and his only son, that was remarkable beyond what Ephraim had with his son, Shuthelah, who was the first-born among Ephraim's three sons (Num. 26:35-37).

Friday, September 21st - Joshua 13: 32

This verse emphasizes how Joshua adhered to the arrangements Moses had prescribed regarding the settlement of the two and a half tribes in their territory east of the Jordan. Joshua rightly adhered to the apportioning set by Moses because he recognized rightly that it had been set by the Lord. By Moses hearing and heeding the Lord and by Joshua doing likewise, through his respect for the directives of Moses, the land east of the Jordan was apportioned in a way that was full of blessing for each tribe and made clear to them all the boundaries in which they would find their contentment. Our blessing is always to be found and enjoyed within the limitations as well as the generous allowances of our Lord.

Saturday, September 22nd - Joshua 13: 33

This verse is almost a repetition of v.14. Together these verses form a kind of Hebrew progressive parallelism, wherein a thought is expressed and then expressed again with further development. In v.14, the fact was stated that the tribe of Levi received no land but rather shares in the offerings their brethren would make to the Lord. In v.33 this fact is stated again, yet instead of the offerings of Israel being the Levites' inheritance it is the Lord to whom the offerings were made who is said to be the Levites' inheritance. For the Levites' lack of land, the Lord compensates by providing for them a share in all of Israel's offerings and a greater and more intimate communion with Himself. The more faithfully the Levites devoted themselves to the Lord, the more fruitfully they would serve as salt and light

ministering throughout all of the tribes of the covenant nation. Wise and wonderful are the dispositions our Lord makes for us.

Sunday, September 23rd - Joshua 14: 1, 2

In chapter 13 we were given an account of how the land east of the Jordan River had been apportioned to the two and a half tribes according to the provisions set up by Moses. In chapters 14-21 we have an account of the determining of the internal boundaries of Canaan and the assignment of the various portions to the nine and a half tribes. Moses had not set the tribal boundaries within Canaan for the simple reason that he had not been allowed by the Lord to enter the Promised Land. Therefore, the men responsible for drawing up the tribal boundaries within Canaan are mentioned in 14:1. Those men were: 1) Joshua, the Lord's appointed civil leader under whom Israel accomplished unimaginable feats of faith and who was a man of proven faith, courage, and piety. 2) Eleazer, the Lord's anointed high priest and spiritual leader of Israel. Eleazer was the third son of Aaron, who became high priest after Aaron's death because Eleazar's two older brothers, Nadab and Abihu, had been consumed by fire from the Lord due to their having abused their priestly offices (Lev. 10:1-7). In stark contrast to the performance of his older brothers, Eleazar's son, Phinehas, served to avert the Lord's judgment on His people when he killed the Israelite man and Midianite woman who were symptomatic of Israel's flirtation with a godless nation (Num. 25). 3) The heads of households of the tribes, men who had proven themselves godly leaders among their own families and relatives. The use of these men by the Lord in service to His people makes clear to us that Israel was to be under God as a meritocracy, led and governed by men who with humility and fidelity cleaved faithfully to the Lord and trusted and obeyed Him fully. So should the Church be led by men full of grace and of the Holy Spirit (Acts 6:3; 1 Tim. 3:1-10; Titus 1:5-9).

Monday, September 24th - Joshua 14: 1, 2

In addition to the men serving to apportion Canaan among the nine and a half tribes, we are given a note regarding the method they used to assign each portion to a specific tribe. That method was the lot that would seemingly indicate by chance the assignment of a tribe to its portion, yet which by the direction and in the hand of the Lord was the way He indicated to all Israel His holy, just, wise, and loving will and provision for His people. We learn from Num. 26:53-56 how Moses not only commanded the use of the lot, but also instructed that the assigned portions be adjusted to larger or smaller dimensions according to the relative size of the tribes inheriting them. God's dealings with His people are always gracious but never unjust or inconsiderate.

Tuesday, September 25th - Joshua 14: 1, 2

Twice in these verses the land of Canaan is referred to as Israel's inheritance and once it is said that Israel inherited the land. We know from all that has previously been written in Joshua that the sons of Israel conquered Canaan by their own marching, deploying, and fighting. Yet, lest they (or we) ever consider that their conquest resulted from their own performance, we are told repeatedly that Joshua and Israel did all by the direction and enabling power of the Lord. We should never forget our Lord's gracious provision nor regard all that we have receive as being anything other than a gracious and loving inheritance from the Lord, conferred upon us at the cost not of our service but rather of His sacrifice.

September 2012

Wednesday, September 26th - Joshua 14: 3-5

These verses explain why there were only nine and a half of Israel's tribes included in the apportionment of the Promised Land. We are reminded that the two and a half tribes had already made their choice to dwell east of the Jordan River. God had honored their choice, Moses had allowed it, and Joshua had confirmed it. History would reveal that the region those tribes had chosen was more vulnerable to attack from other nations than was the Promised Land proper. However, there is no indication that the tribes dwelling east of the Jordan had sinned in their choice. Our Lord allows us to make many choices that may not be the wisest but that have potential to make us wiser in hindsight.

Thursday, September 27th - Joshua 14: 3-5

Neither the two and a half tribes nor the tribe of Levi were included in the apportionment of the land of Canaan. The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh had chosen their settlement east of the Jordan, while the Lord made a choice for the tribe of Levi. That priestly tribe would not receive territory but would be scattered throughout all of the tribes, including those east of the Jordan. In return for their priestly service among the covenant people the tribes benefitting from that service were directed to provide cities and pasture lands for the Levites. Those cities would not only provide the Levites with shelter and land for growing their food, but some would become cities of refuge for anyone within Israel who committed manslaughter (Num. 35:1-8). The designs of our Lord may be diverse among His people but they always serve for the highest good of all of His people, even for the least and worst of them!

Friday, September 28th - Joshua 14: 3-5

These verses tell how the tribes of Israel were reckoned. The patriarch Jacob had twelve sons born to him from his two wives and two concubines. Of these sons and their descendants the sons of Levi were

not regarded as one of the twelve tribes, but were chosen and called by God to perform a priestly service for all of the other tribes. That left eleven tribal sons of Israel. However, Jacob's son, Joseph was regarded not as the head of a tribe but rather as the father of his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, whom Jacob adopted and blessed in his old age (Gen. 48:8-20). So by the subtraction of Levi and Joseph and the addition of Ephraim and Manasseh, there were twelve tribes of Israel, all of whom were served by the priestly tribe of Levi. This arrangement resulted from the doings of God, who eliminated Levi and elevated his tribe to priestly service. The Lord, who had exalted Joseph in Egypt, also exalted Joseph's sons in Israel. The callings and careers of the people of God are less simple but more spiritual than we may realize. When we recall all the sins committed by the sons of Jacob, the fact that there is any organization and spiritual life and order to the people of God is an amazing miracle of the Lord's grace and saving love and power.

Saturday, September 29th - Joshua 14: 3-5

The varying services and settlements of Israel's tribes were orchestrated by the Lord and carried out by the obedience of Israel. In v.5 we read: the sons of Israel did just as the Lord had commanded....The Israelites were a people composed by the God of gracious redemption. Their Lord settled them under the administration of His servants, Moses and Joshua. They by faith trusted and obeyed their God in the matter of how they served and where they settled. God gave them no cause for jealousy, or envy in all they received from His abounding grace and wise love. This same sort of provision our God makes for us according to His provision for us in our heavenly Joshua (Eph. 4:1-16; Phil. 2:1-5).

Sunday, September 30th – Joshua 14: 6

The opening verses of Joshua 14 give an overview of the apportionment of the Promised Land among the nine and a half tribes of Israel that would settle there. In vv.6-15 of this chapter the focus zooms in on one of the most faithful and significant of the inheritors of the Promised Land. Caleb is one of the most fascinating characters to be found in Scripture. He is fascinating because he was utterly faithful to the Lord and followed Him fully (v.14). His example is also edifying as we see in him how admirably a man of strong faith thinks, feels, asks, and acts. This man of faith is set before us in the Word of God as an example that calls and encourages us to grow and to serve and to be blessedly rewarded by our Lord as we trust and obey Him by the faith He has given to us.

Monday, October 1st - Joshua 14: 6

Caleb comes to our attention because he drew near to Joshua. All who draw near to the Savior, whose Greek name is Jesus but whose Hebrew name is Joshua (Yeshua) will eventually draw the notice and admiration of others. Caleb came to Joshua in company with the heads of his tribe of Judah. They evidently drew near for the casting of the lot that would determine the area of their inheritance. Yet

Caleb did not need to wait for a lot to indicate the territory of his inheritance. He came to Joshua on the basis of the Word of God that had been spoken to Moses at Kadesh-barnea, after the people of Israel had faithlessly refused to enter the Promised Land. There the Lord took special notice of Caleb's faith that distinguished him from his unbelieving brethren and the Lord rewarded him with a promise to bring him into the land of Canaan and there to give him territory for himself and for his descendants (Num. 14:24). Faith draws us near to Jesus and prompts us to trust and follow Him. All who faithfully follow Jesus will not be disappointed but will be abundantly blessed (1 Pet. 2:6; Eph. 1:3).

Tuesday, October 2nd - Joshua 14: 6

Throughout Scripture, Caleb is referred to as the son of Jephunneh, the Kenizzite (or grandson of Kenaz, see Josh. 15:17). Yet the Word of God records nothing about either Jephunneh or Kenaz, except that Kenaz was a descendant of Hezron who descended from Perez, the grandson of Judah (1 Chron. 2: 5,18,25; 4:15). We can deduce that Jephunneh died either in Egyptian captivity or during Israel's forty-year wilderness sojourn. However unremarkable the lives of Kenaz and Jephunneh may have been, they are mentioned in Scripture honorably in connection with Caleb, a hero of faith. The best way we can honor our father and mother, in accordance with the Fifth Commandment, is by our own growth in grace and exercise of faith whereby we follow our heavenly Father fully.

Wednesday, October 3rd - Joshua 14: 6, 7

What Caleb begins to say in these verses draws Joshua and all readers of God's Word into a recollection of the events of past years, recorded in Num. 13,14. Yet Caleb does not indulge in a sentimental reminiscence. He has come to Joshua to make a claim that is based upon God's Word that Caleb had treasured in his heart for nearly half a century. Caleb had seen and spoken of the riches and challenges that had faced Israel on the verge of their having entered Canaan at Kadesh-barnea. He regarded the riches as great and the challenges as slight because Caleb saw with the eyes of his heart that focused on the goodness and greatness of his God. We do well to be like Caleb, hearing and heeding God's Word, treasuring it in our hearts, and using our heads only to consider not whether we can trust the Lord but only how we can best follow Him fully.

Thursday, October 4th - Joshua 14: 6, 7

When Caleb says that he brought back from his spy mission a report from his heart, he is revealing to us the key to right perceiving, thinking, and acting. Concerning perception, Jesus informs us that those who are pure in heart see God and are accordingly blessed (Mt. 5:8). Pure hearts are those opened unreservedly to God and focused upon Him by faith. By their seeing God, such faithful ones see all things by God's true light (Ps. 36:9). This leads them to think rightly by their knowing and loving the truth that

sets them and others free. Therefore, they seek ever to act in accordance only with God's revealed will. The Church of the Lord will always do well to be guided by those having such faithful hearts.

Friday, October 5th - Joshua 14: 7-9

Caleb expresses in this brief recollection not only what he did but also how he saw and considered all things through the eyes of faith. He rightly regarded Moses as the servant of the Lord. When Moses chose him to represent the tribe of Judah in the spy mission from Kadesh-barnea, Caleb submitted to his mission as a man chosen for it by the will of the Lord. This faithful son of Jephunneh also rightly reckoned that by the authority, promise, and power of the Lord, Israel could and should have entered Canaan forty years prior to the time when Israel did enter the land. Caleb, by his faith, sought and saw his God in all things. Therefore, while he saw and respected Moses, he saw above that great leader of Israel the greater God of Israel. Also, when Caleb saw the giants in the land he did not let fear obscure his vision of the almighty hand of His great God who could reduce the giants to grasshoppers (Num. 14:9). The faithful soul sees the enemies and challenges of his situation. Yet, above them he sees the prevailing power of his Lord. It is the divine power and goodness that prompt him to be governed by the divine promises. He draws comfort and confidence from those promises and seeks to instill such comfort and confidence in others.

Saturday, October 6th - Joshua 14: 7-9

It was not only Caleb who spoke from his faithful heart. Joshua also joined Caleb in giving a report of the richness of Canaan and of the ripeness of its inhabitants to be vanquished by the Lord's might working through His people (Num. 14:6-9). However, at Kadesh-barnea Joshua and Caleb gave a minority report. Ten of the spies spoke what was in their hearts, too, and that was not faith but fear. That fear spread throughout Israel and prompted them to refuse to enter Canaan. Remarkably, Caleb reveals by what he says in v.8 that while he was grieved over the faithless service and the bitter consequences that the fears of that majority brought upon all of Israel, he still regarded the ten fearful spies as his brethren whom he loved and to whom he was joined and committed for better or for worse. Faith in a believer's heart produces not only a believer's leaning on the Lord but also his loving regard for his brethren.

Sunday, October 7th - Joshua 14: 7-9

Caleb's faith had prompted him to speak the truth in his report on the spy mission. That same faith prompted Caleb to love his brethren and to suffer with them. Finally, Caleb's faithfulness, while despised by his brethren, was a delight to the Lord and prompted the Lord to reward His servant. That reward is what Caleb now claims from Joshua. While his faith made Caleb to be lovingly and patiently submissive to the Lord's discipline of all Israel, it also made him confident and bold in his claim of the divine promise. Forty-five years prior to this point in the history of God's people, Caleb would not

possess the land without his brethren. Yet, Caleb also would not perish with his unbelieving brethren in the wilderness. Instead, he would continue to grow in grace and exercise patience in the knowledge that he would one day have his reward. That day had come and Caleb shows no sign of regret that he was obliged to wait for his reward from God. Neither will any of us have a shred of regret when we enter into the joy of our Master that will be our reward on the day of His judgment.

Monday, October 8th - Joshua 14: 10, 11

With these verses, Caleb makes a transition from his performance and God's promise in the past to the present provision of the Lord. In his words of testimony, Caleb reveals not the slightest regret or criticism of the way the Lord obliged him to suffer long with his unbelieving brethren. Instead, he gratefully acknowledges the grace and goodness of the Lord when he says that the Lord preserved him alive through the forty-year wilderness affliction as well as through the five years of Canaan conquest. Caleb was a marvel and he did marvel that God let him live to the age of eighty-five and also let him live when all of his contemporaries, except for Joshua, had died in the wilderness under the chastising hand of the Lord. If we look for God's grace where it is, we shall find it in abundance. It is always the chief property of faith that we look for such divine grace from our rewarding God (Heb. 11:6).

Tuesday, October 9th - Joshua 14: 10, 11

Caleb testifies to his knowing of God's grace and goodness in the fact that the Lord had preserved his life through the wilderness judgment of Israel. Caleb also testifies that he had not only survived that period of affliction, but he had also prospered in it. The four and a half decades of his life that the locusts of time should have consumed were so completely preserved by God that Caleb could claim that he had the same vigor at the age of eighty-five that he had at forty when he was ready to enter Canaan at Kadesh-barnea. God's loving power can preserve or restore what we fear is being eaten away from our lives.

Wednesday, October 10th - Joshua 14: 10, 11

We have noted that Caleb referred to his faithless fellow spies as his brethren (v.8). That designation indicates no malice or resentment but rather loving respect. There is surely some connection between Caleb's charity with regard to his brethren, his patience under the hand of the Lord, and the fact that he stands before Joshua at eighty-five with undiminished vigor. Love builds up, not only the ones loved but also the one loving. Patience is a soothing balm where anxiety and anger threaten others and tear down the anxious and angry one. Here is a word to the wise who would desire to live long and well.

Thursday, October 11th - Joshua 14: 11, 12

Caleb's charity and patience may have contributed to his sustained vigor into his old age. The need he had for such vigor is apparent when we consider the territory he claimed. Caleb asked Joshua for the hill country within Judah's allotted region. The hill country was tough terrain that would require strength and stamina to be possessed by those who would seek to settle there. Furthermore, the toughest residual inhabitants of Canaan remained to be conquered in the hill country that Caleb sought as his possession. The Anakim there would neither surrender to nor be vanquished by a weak leader of Israel who sought to drive them out of the territory that they held. The blessing of the Lord gives to His servants empowering strength to face all of the challenges they may encounter in their serving Him and even in their possessing their reward from Him.

Friday, October 12th - Joshua 14: 11, 12

The territory Caleb claimed was not strange to him. He knew what territory was to be his because he refers to the Lord having spoken about it in the aftermath of Israel's Kadesh-barnea refusal to enter Canaan. In Dt. 1:36 we read of the Lord promising to Caleb, the land on which he has set foot. This indicates that Caleb received from God the portion of Canaan that he personally had reconnoitered. There in that difficult hill country that was inhabited by mighty Anakim who dwelt in large fortified cities, Caleb saw not only great and disheartening challenges but also the greater and heartening power of the Lord who had promised that land to those who would trust and follow Him. Caleb did trust and follow the Lord fully, and by that faith in the Lord he was not disappointed but rather was delighted in the reward he received from his heavenly Master. By such faith in the God of salvation we come to possess a glorious, eternal inheritance, even though our sins, our sin nature, and Satan all conspire to challenge our claim to it.

Saturday, October 13th – Joshua 14: 11, 12

Caleb had survived the forty-year wilderness judgment on Israel by faith in the promise of God that he would inherit the land he had spied out. Caleb had similarly survived the five-year period of Israel's wars of conquest in Canaan. Now that Caleb comes to claim his divinely promised reward, he continues to manifest his faith in the Lord. The confidence of Caleb does not arise from his remarkable physical strength, still less does it issue from carnal presumption. This giant of faith rests in and relies upon his Lord even in the matter of his receiving and entering into his reward. Accordingly, Caleb states: perhaps the Lord will be with me, and I shall drive them out as the Lord has spoken. There is no doubt but neither is there presumption in Caleb's use of the word perhaps when he speaks of the Lord's being with him. Faith always focuses upon the Lord and does not presume to know exactly how the Lord will bless but is rather assured in knowing that He will bless (Heb. 11:6). Caleb, like the Apostle Paul, had learned the secret of being content with the Lord, whether He blessed through His abasing chastisements, such as in Israel's wilderness wanderings, or through His abounding triumphs.



Sunday, October 14th - Joshua 14: 11, 12

Caleb's use of the word, perhaps, does not indicate any doubt in his mind or reservation in his heart. He knew with certainty that the Lord would be with him because he was united to the Lord by a strong and pure faith. However, one's knowing the Lord by faith does not entail that one always knows precisely how the Lord will bless him. Caleb had gained spiritual profit through his patient bearing of Israel's wilderness wanderings and he left to the Lord the determination of whether he would profit further by his being humbled by the Anakim in the hill country or by his triumphing over them. Let us learn to trust our Lord as our great physician and not presume to prescribe to Him how He should heal us.

Monday, October 15th - Joshua 14: 11, 12

If Caleb is to triumph over the Anakim, he rightly reasons that he will do so while employing the vigor his Lord had granted to him. Accordingly, he speaks of his driving the Anakim out of his territory. However, Caleb further knew that his success would not be by his strength but rather by the Lord's being with him with enabling power. We should learn from this to strive and serve, using the gifts our God has given to us, but using them according to His power that mightily works within us and is effectual through us (Col. 1:29).

Tuesday, October 16th - Joshua 14: 13-15

Caleb's faithful claim does not meet with Joshua's refusal or a begrudging granting of the claim. The first thing Joshua does is to bless the man making the claim. It is the blessing of the Lord that makes rich, not our possession of land, materials, or money (Prov. 10:22). If God is with us, who can prevail against us? If God blesses, who can curse us? The blessing of the Lord makes even the evil intention of others serve for our good, as Joseph informed his brothers who had sold him into slavery (Gen. 50:20).

Wednesday, October 17th - Joshua 14: 13-15

Joshua gave Caleb his blessing, then he gave to him the city of Hebron and its surrounding region. The promises of God are great but the provision of the Lord is always greater. God adds blessing to the bounty He graciously and generously gives to His servants. Without the blessing of the Lord our possessing His bounty would turn from our reward to our ruin. Let us learn to seek the Lord's blessing, in the valleys of our trials as well as in the high places of our triumphs.

Thursday, October 18th - Joshua 14: 13-15

Hebron had already been defeated by Joshua and Israel (Josh. 10:36,37). However, it had not been cleared of all of the Anakim, as we learn from Josh. 15:14 that records Caleb's driving out from Hebron Anak's three sons. In v.14 of our passage we are reminded that Caleb received Hebron as a reward for his faith by which he followed the Lord fully. It is clear from the persistent return of resistant Anakim to Hebron that the man who received this inheritance by faith would have to possess it by faith. Our Lord never gives to us more than we can bear, even of His blessed rewards.

Friday, October 19th - Joshua 14: 13-15

Hebron was the inheritance of Caleb until the day of the writing of this portion of Scripture and, presumably, for a long time thereafter. This mention of duration serves as a token and reminder to us of the enduring nature of the Lord's gifts and blessings. The quality of this inheritance may be measured by the significant part Hebron played in the redemptive history of Israel. The city became one of the cities of refuge (Josh. 20: 7) that served as a beacon of saving mercy. It also was the place from which David ruled for the first seven years of his reign (2 Sam. 2:2,11). Previously, Hebron had been the place where Abraham bought burial ground for Sarah, and upon which he built an altar to the Lord. Abraham was himself buried in Hebron, along with Isaac and Jacob (Gen. 23:19; 25:9;49:31). The inheritance of Caleb had been, was, and would be a most significant place. This man of faith was richly rewarded for his exercise of the precious believing power the Lord had given to him. The Lord always rewards those who use the faith He gives to them, providing eternal treasure as a reward for their giving water to the thirsty and food to the hungry (Mt. 25:34-40).

Saturday, October 20th - Joshua 14: 13-15

This passage concludes by telling us of the name change that had taken place with Hebron. Formerly it had been named Kiriath-arba, meaning, city of Arba. The man after whom the city was named was the father of Anak from whom the Anakim descended. Arba was the greatest man among a tribe of men of physical stature and prowess. Yet greater than the great man was the Lord and the Lord's empowered people. Accordingly, the Lord's servants vanquished this man's descendants and erased his memory by changing the name of his city. We who are trophies of the Lord's saving mercy shall triumph over the greatest people who are without the Lord. As Jesus tells us, the meek inherit the earth (Mt. 5:5).

Sunday, October 21st - Joshua 14: 13-15

By the Lord's direction a jewel in the crown of the Promised Land is given to Caleb, a hero of faith. Caleb had followed the Lord fully and although he was for decades nearly alone in his faithful following of the Lord, he was not disappointed either in his pilgrimage or in his inheritance. Caleb is held up to us in Scripture as an example and incentive for all who are in Christ. By the faith our God has given to us, we

too can lovingly follow the Lord who has loved us; we too can do feats and be blessed and receive rich rewards.

Monday, October 22nd - Joshua 15: 1-12

These verses sketch the borders of the territory allotted to the tribe of Judah. The lot for Judah was drawn first because Reuben, Jacob's first-born, had sinned away his birthright (Gen 49:3,4). The sins of the fathers cause their children to suffer the consequences, although not the guilt, of those actual sins. A Bible map shows that Judah's was a spacious territory. However, it was set within boundaries determined by the Lord. The southern and eastern borders protected Judah from Egypt and Edom. Also, in the wise and loving providence of the Lord, the inheritance of Caleb, who was of the tribe of Judah, was set in the heart of his brethren's territory. Therefore, Caleb's rich reward did not separate him, although it did distinguish him, from the brethren of his tribe. Our Lord's gifts and graces serve to draw us together with our brethren in Christ, rather than making us independent of them.

Tuesday, October 23rd - Joshua 15: 1-4

These verses describe the southern border of Judah's territory. Although Egypt and Edom were enemies of Israel, the Lord bound His people within their own territory and prohibited them from indulging in expansionist and imperial endeavors. Much of the land in this southern region was and remains today desert and wilderness. Therefore, the Lord by His providence and loving design placed a natural barrier of protection between his people and two of the nations that had oppressed and fought against them. While our Lord directs us to guard our ambitions, He does not leave us vulnerable in our obedient meekness and contentment within His containment.

Wednesday, October 24th - Joshua 15: 5-11

These verses sketch out the eastern and northern borders of Judah's inheritance. The eastern border was the Dead Sea. The northern border was traced through a number of cities, some of which are known to us, but many of which are not. The line of the northern border ran from Beth-hoglah, which was situated about three miles north of the northern shore of the Dead sea, to just west of Jabneel where it met the eastern edge of the Mediterranean Sea. The line was not straight but rather followed varying topographical features. This border ran between Judah and Benjamin and Dan, whose tribal territories were situated to the north of Judah. The northern border of Judah, interestingly, ran through the city of Jerusalem, which Judah and Benjamin shared and which was a link that served to make those two tribes have an especially close affinity for each other. It was Benjamin alone who stayed true to Judah when centuries later the ten northern tribes rebelled against Solomon's son Rehoboam (1 Ki. 12:16-24). However, prior to that time there had been strife between Judah and Benjamin in the days of Saul (from Benjamin) and David (from Judah). Yet perhaps no loving affinity has ever been greater than

that between the Apostle Paul (from Benjamin) and Jesus (from Judah). Boundaries between enemies serve for protection while boundaries between brethren serve to distinguish but not to separate them.

Thursday, October 25th - Joshua 15: 12

This verse informs us that the western border of Judah's territory was the coastline of the Mediterranean Sea. This border included in Judah's inheritance such ancient Philistine cities as Gaza, Ashkelon, and Ashdod. When we consider that Judah's territory contained these enemies, as well as the Jebusites of Jerusalem, we conclude that the Lord wisely sprinkles thorns among the blessings He gives to His people. Such thorns are no doubt intended to serve not as punishments for His people so much as prods to encourage them to look not to their land but to their Lord for their ultimate help and blessing. In sum, Judah was bounded by two seas, to the east and west, and had enemies to the south and east as well as within, but brethren to the north. By this varied situation the sons of Judah would both fight their enemies and forge fraternal ties with their friends and grow in the grace, knowledge, and power of the Lord through it all. Similarly, the variations in our personal situations are not defects but instead result from divine design for our good.

October 2012

Friday, October 26th - Joshua 15: 13-19

Here we come to a passage in which Caleb performs feats of faith as he moves to take possession of his inheritance. It is one thing for believers to have the great and precious promises and gracious provision of the Lord; it is quite another thing for believers to possess, apply to themselves, and effectively live according to the divine promises and provision. Caleb is an example of a believer who not only has rich blessings offered to him by God but who also receives and acts according to such divine provision. Let us learn from this not to be mere hearers of the Word but also effectual doers of it (Jas. 1:22).

Saturday, October 27th - Joshua 15: 13, 14

The way these verses are written tells us that Caleb's portion was one that contained considerable challenges. We might see the residing of three sons of Anak in Hebron to be defects in the gift God gave to His faithful servant. Yet we know from previous verses that the Lord had also granted to Caleb extraordinary vigor of body and soul that equipped him to be more than a conqueror of the mighty enemies who resisted his possessing his inheritance (Josh. 14:10,11). Our Lord knows how to empower His servants to overcome whatever obstacles may arise to challenge their entering into the rest He provides for them in Christ. Through their faithful fighting, believers also grow stronger in their faith.

Sunday, October 28th - Joshua 15: 13, 14

Caleb and his brethren from the tribe of Judah actually took possession of the portion of the land described in these verses after the death of Joshua (Jud. 1:1,2,10-15). In the Judges account we read of the sons of Anak being struck (Jud. 1:10), while here in Joshua we are told that they were driven out of the territory of Caleb's possession. There is no contradiction here as the Hebrew word translated, struck, in the Judges account could mean to kill or simply to assault. The point is that Anak's sons were effectively and permanently ejected from Caleb's inheritance but not without a fight. Caleb was obliged to use force, whether lethal or not, and could only have prevailed over such great foes by the enabling power of the Lord (Josh. 14:12). Our God enables us to be more than conquerors over all of our enemies, and if they are left alive it is only temporary and according to God's sinless use of even such hardened sinful men for His holy purposes to achieve our highest good.

Monday, October 29th - Joshua 15: 15

Caleb's clearing exploits extended not only throughout his portion of the land but also beyond it. Debir was not part of Caleb's inheritance. Yet it did belong to the whole tribe of Judah. Caleb shows himself to be not only a man of fearless faith but also a man of loving regard for his brethren, looking out not only for his own interests but also for the interests of his brethren (Phil. 2:3,4).

Tuesday, October 30th – Joshua 15: 16, 17

The city of Debir must have presented a sufficient challenge to Caleb to prompt him to use wise and inspiring leadership in addition to his own extraordinary strength. Accordingly, Caleb offers his daughter's hand in marriage as an incentive for the man who would lead the charge and prevail against Debir. One of the valuable characteristics of a man of faith is that he knows when to delegate an assignment and how generously to compensate the one who takes the delegated assignment. Such delegation spreads the burden of work but also extends rewarding opportunities to others so that they might profit greatly from their extraordinary labors. Caleb asked for a volunteer to risk his life in order to attain a bride who would enrich his life. This volunteer serves as a foreshadowing of Christ, who gave His life to attain His bride.

Wednesday, October 31st - Joshua 15: 16, 17

It may seem to us that Caleb offers his daughter as a mere object to lure a man to risk his life in pursuit of a reward. However, we do well to judge Caleb's proposal in light of what we know about the man from Scripture's account of him. He was a man of faith, wisdom, and love. His delegation of this assignment was part of his loving service to his brethren. A man prompted by faithful dependence upon the Lord and guided by godly wisdom and holy love is not likely to formulate a plan that treats his

daughter like an object to appeal to low, carnal considerations of a man needed to do dirty and dangerous work. Godly wisdom and love always enable a man to conceive of ways effectively to serve for the profit and benefit of all concerned in his ventures. Othniel would receive for his part a godly wife; Achsah would receive a faithful and courageous husband of proven valor and effective skill. No one is the loser who trusts in the Lord and looks ultimately to Him for His blessed reward.

Thursday, November 1st - Joshua 15: 16, 17

Othniel is referred to as being Caleb's younger brother (Jud. 1:13). This would mean that Othniel received his niece to be his wife. However, while Caleb is designated as the son of Jephunneh, Othniel is designated as the son of Kenaz (Jud. 1:13). Therefore, these men may have been more like cousins than full brothers. We need not quibble over the degrees of separation between Othniel and Achsah. The light of Scripture instead focuses our attention on the character and accomplishments of these people. Othniel was Israel's first judge, who served after the death of Joshua as a redeeming champion and wise leader of the covenant people (Jud. 3:9-11). The man who proved to be a courageous fighter against the men of Debir, demonstrated his worthiness to become Caleb's son-in-law and thereafter proved to be a faithful judge of the people of God. When we faithfully fight the battles of the Lord, we demonstrate our mettle and develop our capacities to serve in higher ways in the future.

Friday, November 2nd - Joshua 15: 18, 19

Othniel fought and won a battle in order to receive the reward of a godly bride. Achsah, the bride of Othniel, proved to be a richer reward than Othniel may have at first supposed. This daughter of a godly father appears to have character as godly as Caleb's. She who had been blessed with a husband asks her father for yet more blessing. It appears from the wording of these verses that Achsah persuaded her husband to ask her father for a field. Apparently, the field given was not suitable for cultivation because it contained no supply of water. Significantly, it is not Othniel who observes this defect and takes steps to rectify it, but it is rather his new bride who seeks blessing upon the blessing of the field. At her coming to Caleb, he, being a man of faith and a loving father, discerned her intention and invited her request. She therefore asks for land containing springs to be added to the field she had already received. Caleb gladly and generously granted to her more than she asked by giving her tracts to the north and south of her field, each of which contained springs. Happy is the man who has a faithful wife who with humility and boldness asks blessings from her heavenly Father that will enrich her and her husband and her children.

Saturday, November 3rd - Joshua 15: 20

This verse sums up the account of Judah's inheritance. This royal tribe rightly received its territory first among the sons of Israel. Special attention is given to Caleb, the hero of faith from this royal tribe, and

when we consider the object of his saving faith we perceive the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who took onto Himself our sins to give us an inheritance in the riches of His Father's glorious kingdom. Jesus was also the Lion from the tribe of Judah, who defeated all of our enemies and rules over us for His glory and for our good.

Sunday, November 4th - Joshua 15: 21-62

These verses list the cities that were contained within the borders of Judah's territory. The sons of Israel built none of the cities listed but instead ejected the inhabitants of those places and inhabited them. These cities were gifts to Israel by the Lord according to His promise to them through Moses (Dt. 6:10,11). They serve as tokens in redemptive history to the eternal and glorious dwelling places our Redeemer is preparing for us in His Father's house (Jn. 14:2,3).

Monday, November 5th - Joshua 15: 21-62

The territory of Judah was composed of four distinctive regions: the south (vv.21-32); the lowlands (vv.33-47); the hill country (vv.48-60); and the wilderness (vv.61,62). Judah's inheritance was rich and varied in its topography, and while some portions were rather barren, all portions contained at least some cities and therefore were habitable. The Lord makes provision for His people in all sorts of places and situations. Wherever He leads His children and servants and whatever He provides for them where He calls them to live will be abundantly adequate for them to serve for His glory and for the good of others.

Tuesday, November 6th - Joshua 15: 21-32

In the southern region of Judah's territory Scripture lists thirty-six named places. Yet the final total in v.32 is listed as twenty-nine. Perhaps some of the places listed were reckoned as cities while the rest were regarded as villages. Nine of these named places were later given to Simeon (Josh. 19:1-9) in accordance with the provision Moses had made to adjust relative territory sizes to accommodate the different populations of the tribes of Israel (Num. 33:54). Most of the places named in these verses remain unknown to us. Kabzeel was later home to Benaiah, of whom we read in 2 Sam. 23:20, as being the son of Jehoiada and grandson of a valiant man. Benaiah killed Moabite enemies of Israel as well as a lion in a pit on a snowy day! Beer-sheba was, of course, home to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Ziklag was later given to the tribe of Simeon (Josh. 19:5), was destroyed by the Amalekites in the days of David's flight from Saul (1 Sam. 30:1ff), and was still an inhabited city after the Babylonian Captivity (Neh. 9:28). Only some of what the Lord's people did as they lived their lives in these southern cities of Judah is known to us. But all that transpired in the lives of all the Lord's people living in these cities is known perfectly by the Lord and will be by Him rewarded perfectly in the final day.

Wednesday, November 7th - Joshua 15: 33-47

These verses list the cities of Judah that were located in the lowlands of the Mediterranean coastal plain. It was then and still remains a fertile region from which not only Judah but also other tribes of Israel received food. Samson would arise from Zorah (Jud. 13:2,3,24) and Adullam contained the cave in which David took refuge for a time from Saul (1 Sam. 22:1). The Judean king, Amaziah, fled vainly to Lachish from his assassins (2 Ki. 14:17-20). This region also contained Philistine cities such as Beth-dagon (house of Dagon) after the Philistine god. Ekron, Ashdod, and Gaza were also cities inhabited by the Philistines, whom the Israelites never really subdued until David's reign. The Lord not only provided food for His people in this lowland region but also prods for His people to depend upon Him as they contended with the Philistines. Our Lord always makes vital and varied provision for us according to our needs and His blessed purposes for our good.

Thursday, November 8th - Joshua 15: 48-60

These verses list cities contained in the mountainous Judean ridge that runs north and south through the center of Israel. The whole range was and still is intersected by fertile valleys that produced food, fruit, and wine for the covenant people. As with the previous lists, most of the cities are unknown to us. However, Giloh was known as the birth-place of Ahitophel (2 Sam. 15:12) while Maon was the city where Nabal lived—two godless characters in Israel's history. Carmel is not to be confused with Mt. Carmel where Elijah prevailed against the Baalites, but was a southern mountain city mentioned in connection with kings David and Uzziah (1 Sam. 15:12; 25:2ff; 2 Chron. 26:10). Ziph was a desert town in the region by that name to which David fled from Saul (1 Sam. 23:14ff; 26:2,3). The men of Ziph tried to betray David into Saul's hands but the Lord granted to David a narrow escape wherein he and his men fled on one side of a mountain while Saul and his army pursued on the opposite side of that mountain. One notable omission can be noted in this list. The city of Ephratah, or Bethlehem, does not appear, although it is contained in the Septuagint version of the Old Testament. That our Savior was to be born in such an obscure town is one of many indications of His humility and of those humiliations that comprised part of his sufferings for our sin.

Friday, November 9th - Joshua 15: 61, 62

These verses list the cities that were in the fourth region of Judah, the wilderness region. It is notable that there were cities even in this region that was largely wilderness and desert surrounding the Dead Sea. These cities and vibrant vegetation thrived where there were springs in this otherwise barren region. David found shelter from Saul in this region, specifically, in Engedi (1 Sam. 24:1ff), and the man after God's heart also led his army as their king in a great victory over the Edomites at and around the City of Salt (2 Sam. 8:13,14). The Lord knows how to sustain His people even in desert regions.



Saturday, November 10th - Joshua 15: 63

The primary city contained within Judah's territory was Jerusalem. It was a city shared by the tribes of Judah and Benjamin and in due course became the capital city of the covenant nation. However, this verse mentions the fly in the ointment of Judah's inheritance when it notes that the Jebusites, who originally inhabited Jerusalem, could not be driven out by the sons of Judah. Therefore, the Jebusites remained in Jerusalem and within the land of Israel not as converts to the faith of the covenant people but rather as thorns to afflict and test the faithful. In this the Jebusites remind us of the remnants of our own indwelling sin that ever drives us to cry out for perpetual supplies of our Savior's love and mercy (Rom. 7:24,25).

Sunday, November 11th - Joshua 16: 1

After Judah's portion had been allotted the turn came for the sons of Joseph to receive their inheritance. We are reminded in v.4 that Joseph's sons were Ephraim and Manasseh. The members of half of Manasseh's tribe had already received their portion east of the Jordan (Josh. 13:8-32). The fact that Joseph's sons followed the tribe of Judah in receiving their inheritance perhaps indicates that the cycle of allocation was determined according to the significance of the tribes in redemptive history. Judah, the royal tribe, preceded Reuben, Jacob's oldest son who had sinned grievously against his father (Gen. 49:3,4). The promise of the Lord that the Messiah would arise from Judah's tribe gave that tribe prime place in the economy of redemption (Gen. 49:10). Joseph had served to save Jacob and his sons and their families from starvation and the tribes of his sons, who took his place in the reckoning of Israel's tribes, received their inheritance before all of their brothers except those of Judah's tribe. The Lord's gifts to and dealings with His people are always according to His grace, and yet never contrary to righteousness.

Monday, November 12th - Joshua 16: 1-4

The boundaries for the territory of the sons of Manasseh and Ephraim are sketched in these verses. The lot for these tribes was set in the central region of Canaan. The western border was the Mediterranean Sea and the eastern border was the Jordan River. Their southern border was shared with Benjamin, Judah, and a portion of Dan; their northern border was shared with Asher, Zebulun, and Issachar. In this region the tribes of Joseph's two sons dwelt together, separated by a common border between them, with Manasseh's tribe occupying the northern portion while Ephraim dwelt in the southern portion. We should note the loving consideration of the Lord in His dealings with these two tribes that were descended from Jacob's grandsons who had lived all of their lives in Egypt. The Lord settled them together in the heart of the Promised Land. No less is our Lord considerate of our needs in His assigning of our callings and circumstances.

Tuesday, November 13th – Joshua 16: 5-9

These verses give a description of the territory allotted to Ephraim within the region assigned to the two tribes of the sons of Joseph. Manasseh was the older of Joseph's two sons and we would expect the members of his tribe to receive their portion before the descendants of Joseph's younger son, Ephraim, received theirs. We perceive in the actual order God set as opposed to the order man expects the wonder of the Lord choosing the weak things to confound the strong. By His gracious determination, our God calls into existence things that naturally do not exist (Rom. 4:17) to the glory of His saving grace and exalting power.

Wednesday, November 14th - Joshua 16: 5-9

These verses draw the boundaries of a territory that occupied roughly a third of the region assigned to the sons of Joseph. Ephraim's territory was set in the southern portion of that region and was bounded by the Jordan River on the east, Manasseh's territory on the north, and by the Mediterranean Sea on the west, with Judah and Benjamin to the south. In addition to this territory, the sons of Ephraim received several cities that were scattered throughout Manasseh's territory (v.9), for reasons that are not apparent from the account of Scripture. This same sort of granting of cities to one tribe from the territory of another tribe is found also when Manasseh received cities within the territories of Issachar and Asher (Josh. 17:11). Perhaps this arrangement was designed to promote inter-tribal fraternity. We may be sure that all things ordained by the Lord serve for the good of His people (Rom. 8:28).

Thursday, November 15th - Joshua 16: 10

This verse records the failure of the sons of Ephraim to drive the Canaanites out of their territory. As the sons of Judah failed to drive the Jebusites out of Jerusalem (Josh. 15:63), so the sons of Ephraim encountered stubborn resistance from the Canaanites dwelling in Gezer, which was located about twenty miles west northwest of Jerusalem. The Ephraimites did succeed, however, in reducing the implacable Canaanites to slavery. If they could reduce their enemies to servitude, why did the sons of Ephraim fail to drive them from their inheritance? Both instances of these tribes' imperfect performances are recorded as failures. Yet, there is a subtle difference between the failure of the sons of Judah with the Jebusites and the sons of Ephraim with the Canaanites. Scripture records that Judah literally was not able to drive out the Jebusites, whereas Ephraim literally did not dispossess the Canaanites. This slight difference seems to indicate that whereas the sons of Judah tried but failed to deal with the remaining enemies in their territory, the sons of Ephraim to some extent chose not to drive out their enemies, but merely to profit from them. Striving against sin and failing is bad, but striving and then growing complacent with sin is worse.

Friday, November 16th - Joshua 17: 1-11

The borders of Manasseh's territory are sketched out in vv.7-11, but prior to that we are given verses that reveal to us the interactions of some of the members of the tribe of Manasseh. The Word of God always treats the people of the Lord as being infinitely more important than the possessions those people receive from the Lord. It is for living stones that the Son of God died, and not for land and material things, except for the blessed purposes of the ultimate removal of God's curse from the lower creation (Rom. 8:19-23). Our God cares more for our persons than for our possessions, and He will only give to us and let us keep the latter so long as they serve to promote the former.

Saturday, November 17th - Joshua 17: 1, 2

Although Manasseh received his portion after Ephraim had received his, Manasseh was the first-born son of Joseph and accordingly would receive through his descendants a double portion for his inheritance. The tribe of Manasseh had received one portion of its inheritance in the region of Gilead and Bashan that lay east of the Jordan River. The other portion of Manasseh's inheritance was situated within the Promised Land proper. Therefore, although God graciously exalted Ephraim above Manasseh, the Lord did not do so in a way that stripped Manasseh of his fair share. Our God never robs Peter to pay Paul in His kingdom but blesses both together.

Sunday, November 18th - Joshua 17: 1, 2

The division of the tribe of Manasseh between the two portions allocated for that tribe took place along family lines. Specifically, the descendants of Manasseh's own first-born son, Machir, were the ones who would settle east of the Jordan. Machir himself would have been long dead before Israel left Egypt for Canaan. But he was apparently a bold and martial man. From Josh. 17:1,2 we are reminded that the descendants of Machir honored their father by fighting valiantly for Gilead and Bashan (Num. 32:39,4). That territory was desired by this Machirite line of the tribe of Manasseh, for they joined with the tribes of Reuben and Gad in asking Moses for it (Num. 32:1ff). Our Lord gives His people grace and enabling power to work for what they desire and to desire what He will grant to them (Ps. 37:4).

Monday, November 19th - Joshua 17: 1, 2

It is made clear in v.1 that the family line descended from Manasseh's son, Machir, received the territory east of the Jordan. In v.2 we are not simply told the obvious fact that the descendants of Manasseh's other sons inherited their portion in Canaan proper. Instead, we are given a list of the names of the other sons of Manasseh from whom the other family lines issued. Part of the reason for this listing of families is to prepare us for a complication that will be explained in vv.3-6. However, another part of the

reason for this listing surely is to remind us that our God is faithful to His covenant promise to be the God of believers and of their children (Gen. 17:7).

Tuesday, November 20th - Joshua 17: 3-6

Property was possessed and inherited in Israel through lines of male descendants. Yet in the case of one of the descendants of Manasseh this arrangement could not be observed. Zelophehad had no sons but only daughters. That his daughters were not regarded as second-class children is indicated by the fact that their names are listed in v.3. Zelophehad had died in the wilderness leaving no son through whom his line could be accounted and his name honored. Accordingly, his daughters had petitioned Moses and Aaron for the right to possess property among their father's brothers (Num. 23:1-4). Moses had then inquired of the Lord and was told that provision should be made for such contingencies (Num. 27:5-11). The point in all of this is that within the family of faith the children may encounter occasional and extraordinary complications but they should seek and expect to find satisfying solutions when they seek their help from the Lord of their salvation.

Wednesday, November 21st - Joshua 17: 7-11

The borders of Manasseh's territory are drawn out in these verses. This tribe had the Jordan River as its eastern border while the Mediterranean served as its western border. The southern border Manasseh shared with Ephraim while the northern border was shared with the tribes of Asher, Zebulun, and Issachar. This region was almost double the size of Ephraim's territory and it encompassed the most choice and fertile portion of Canaan. In addition the tribe of Manasseh received several cities and their towns located within the territories of Issachar and Asher (v.11). These cities proved to be rather infamous. Beth-shean was where the Philistines hung on the city walls the bodies of Saul and Jonathan, whom they had killed in the battle on Mt. Gilboa (1 Sam. 31). En-dor is known in Scripture as the home of the witch whom Saul had consulted (1 Sam. 28:7ff). Megiddo was where good King Josiah was killed in his battle against Egypt's Pharaoh Neco (2 Ki. 23:28-30). The verses that follow this description of Manasseh's borders reveal the sobering reality that generous gifts to those lacking grateful characters prove not to be blessings but rather burdens.

Thursday, November 22nd - Joshua 17: 12, 13

Here Scripture records Manasseh's failure to take possession of the cities that tribe had received in the territories of Issachar and Asher. With the record of the similar failures of Judah (Josh. 15:63) and Ephraim (Josh. 16:10), this notice of Manasseh's failure adds to the disappointing pattern of the sons of Israel failing perfectly to possess their inheritances. In the opening verses of the Book of Joshua we were told clearly that the success of the covenant people would depend upon their faithful trust in and obedience to the Lord (Josh. 1:6-9). Accordingly, all of these failures are in some respect the bitter fruits

of the failure of faith on the part of God's people. Surely these things are written so that we might profit by our growing in our vital trust in and obedience to the Lord.

Friday, November 23rd - Joshua 17: 14

In view of the Lord's gracious and generous provision for the tribes descended from Joseph, we find in this verse an ungrateful complaint arising from the tribal leaders of Ephraim and Manasseh. The heart of the complaint is a demand for more land. This demand is supported by several reasons, some of them explicit and some implicit. The explicit reason is that the members of these tribes were too numerous to dwell comfortably within their allotted territory. Yet, the tribe of Manasseh contained 52,700 members (Num. 26:34) and the tribe of Ephraim contained 32,500 members (Num. 26:37). Half of Manasseh's tribe would be living east of the Jordan, thus leaving somewhere between 60,000-70,000 living in the region of Canaan proper. Furthermore, the region assigned to these two tribes was richly fertile, more than was Judah's region that would accommodate 76,500 persons (Num. 26:22). Implicit is the hint that these two tribes had been lumped together and treated as one tribe receiving only a single portion of Canaan. The truth was that Ephraim had received one portion and Manasseh had received two portions, one east of and one within Canaan. It is also implied that Joshua, in his allotting of this portion of the territory, was being less considerate and more restrictive in his dealings with these tribes than was the Lord who had made them so numerous. Added to these explicit and implicit reasons was a potential appeal for personal favoritism, since Joshua was a member of the tribe of Ephraim. This complaint is bristling with points that would challenge the most spiritual and wise leader with pressure to grant the remedy sought. Yet, such numerous points are often features of carnal reasoning rather than faith working itself out in love.

Saturday, November 24th - Joshua 17: 14, 15

In response to the complaint, Joshua gives a ruling that is clear and considerate. He also shows that if the members of his own tribe were seeking personal favoritism, then his integrity would disappoint those designs. The man faithful above all to God will not be ensnared in the webs of men. Joshua's ruling is not a dismissive denial but rather a lovingly considerate appeal designed to open the eyes of faith in his complaining brethren so that they might view rightly and live fruitfully within the blessed limits the Lord had provided for them. The numerous people whom the leader of these tribes regarded as a burden, Joshua views as a blessing, telling these leaders to use the people to produce the blessing they seek. Christ works in us to change our perceptions and productions more than He responds to our complaints for changed circumstances.

Sunday, November 25th - Joshua 17: 16-18

The sons of Joseph wanted to change their inheritance by enlarging it. Joshua told them to change themselves by their laboring to improve what they already had received from the Lord. If the people would cease their worrying and instead work to clear out the forests and subdue the enemies within their territory, they would learn that the Lord's provision was abundantly adequate for them all. Yet the leaders of the tribes of the sons of Joseph persist in their complaint. Theirs is not the persevering of faith such as their father Joseph demonstrated in all of his trials. Nor does their persistence prevail over Joshua, who, now that he is being pressed, speaks more plainly to the complaining spirit of the sons of Joseph. Their need was not for more land but rather for more faith that would prompt them to be less complacent and less cowardly. They need not fear the hard work of clearing the forests, for the Lord would empower them rightly to improve the land He had given them. They need not fear the Canaanites, however well-equipped they might be, for their Lord was and had repeatedly demonstrated Himself to be, their almighty helper. Let us learn, as the sons of Joseph should have learned, that we do not need resources we do not have, but rather we need to enter more vitally into the saving Redeemer we do have.

November 2012

Monday, November 26th - Joshua 18: 1

Joshua had been apportioning the land of Canaan and some of the tribes had begun settling into their portions. Judah was in the south with Ephraim to the north of Judah and half of Manasseh's tribe north of Ephraim. With these tribes settled into their appointed territories we learn that a general assembly of the whole covenant nation took place at Shiloh. The place of Shiloh was strategically selected as being in the center of Ephraim's territory that was situated between Manasseh to the north and Judah to the south. The purpose for this assembly was for the setting up of the tabernacle as the center of Israel's worship. Therefore we find that as the people of the Lord were going about their daily practical living, they took time to make provision for their souls. They placed the means of God's grace and the place for their worship of the Lord at the geographical center of their nation, indicating the central place their worship had in their lives and the fact that God was pleased to manifest there His dwelling among His people. Similarly, our lives should be lived and built around our worship of the God of our salvation.

Tuesday, November 27th - Joshua 18:1

The place of Shiloh was not chosen as the location for the tabernacle according to the logic of Israel's leaders. Instead, the place was chosen by the Lord for the clearest manifestation of His grace and glory and for the highest good of His people (Deut. 12:5-11). More significant than Shiloh's central location was its name. Jacob declared the name Shiloh in association with the rule of the Messiah (Gen. 49:10). The name speaks of rest (from Shalom), and the Lord not only had promised His people rest upon their entrance into Canaan (Deut. 12:10), but now that they were in Canaan the Lord had given His people rest by His empowering them to subdue their enemies who had dwelt in the land of Israel's

inheritance. We worship a God who does not require our work for His blessing, but rather our Lord first works blessedly for and in us and then we worship Him in glad and grateful response (Phil. 2:12,13). It was for Israel the highest privilege to worship at Shiloh the God who had released them from Egypt's bondage, sustained them in their wilderness sojourn, empowered them to conquer their Canaanite foes, and settled them in their inheritance.

Wednesday, November 28th - Joshua 18: 1-3

The children of Israel had worked faithfully and effectively by the enabling power of God to subdue their enemies in the land. They had also done well to gather at Shiloh to erect the tabernacle as the provision for regular and continuing worship of the Lord who had blessed them so richly. However, to these commendable actions of the people of God Joshua adds a word of challenge. That challenge was issued in the form of an encouragement for the remaining seven tribes to take possession of their inheritance. For as long as we are in our pilgrimage in this world our lives will be a combination of commendable actions and faults that call for correction. Let us learn not to faint under the discipline of the Lord as though His loving challenges are of the same character as the malicious dominion of our sin from which He has set us free.

Thursday, November 29th - Joshua 18: 3

Why was Joshua's challenge to the seven tribes necessary? We begin to perceive the answer when we consider how Joshua issued the challenge. He inquired into the reason for the delay of the seven tribes in their taking possession of their apportioned territories. By such a question he gave them opportunity to reflect upon the cause of their delay and, if upon such reflection they were to find good reason for it, they could have declared that to Joshua. There is a critical difference between our faithfully waiting upon the Lord and our faithlessly procrastinating from doing His will. Joshua may have discovered that the seven tribes were procrastinating, yet he does not charge and prosecute them so much as he faithfully challenges them to examine themselves in order to discover for themselves whether they were living by faith or not. Our Lord, with loving wisdom, always works gently to afford us opportunity for self-correction before He imposes correction upon us.

Friday, November 30th – Joshua 18: 3

The discontentedness that the sons of Joseph had shown over their allotted inheritance may cast some light on the hidden reason for the delay of the seven tribes in their taking possession of their territories. The tribe of Ephraim and the half tribe of Manasseh found what they claimed to be faults in their allotted territories (Josh. 17:14-18). Joshua faithfully corrected their perception, telling them that the diligent labors of their numerous tribal members would clear the forests and enemies from their lands. Such complaining of those tribes, and the corrective counsel of Joshua that entailed exertion from

the complainers, may have had a discouraging effect upon the remaining seven tribes. A discontented spirit is not easily contained. It tends to spread unless it is identified clearly and dealt with decisively. Such dealings are not pleasant but will be productive.

Saturday, December 1st - Joshua 18: 3

The seven delaying tribes may also have grown to prefer the nomadic life they had lived not only in the hostile wilderness but also for the previous several years during their conquest of Canaan. Under the guise of flexibility and freedom we may become slow to commit to a settled situation that we can view as being fraught with defects that require improvement and enemies who can overcome us if we render ourselves fixed targets for them. Yet our true security and satisfaction are found in our being totally committed to our Lord and His Church and His means of grace, in which we stand firm in our faith until all of our foes flee from us (Eph. 6:10ff, noting three times, stand firm; Jas. 4:7).

Sunday, December 2nd - Joshua 18: 3

With his gentle yet pointed challenge, Joshua also gives to the procrastinating tribes several words of encouragement. He says to his hesitating brethren that the land they had not possessed was appointed to them by the Lord, and therefore should rightly be regarded by them as being in every way desirable. Whatever our God ordains for us may at first glance appear undesirable. Yet, when we bear in mind that our God gives to us only what is right, good, and loving, we see with truer eyes the treasure before us.

Monday, December 3rd - Joshua 18: 3

Joshua wisely reckons that the seven tribes were contemplating the difficulties and dangers of their possessing their land. Such contemplation would cause anyone to pause before committing to action. However the practical challenges these tribes would face in possessing their inheritance were only part of the picture before them. Joshua completes the picture when he reminds his brethren that their Lord was in it for His glory and their good. It is through our God that we should view all of the duties as well as delights that He calls us to possess. Our heavenly Father is the correcting lens through whom our faulty vision best apprehends the blessed character of all that He gives to us. Supposed defects in His gifts are there by His design for our good (2 Cor. 12:7-10).

Tuesday, December 4th - Joshua 18: 3

Joshua seeks to stimulate in his brethren the exercise of their faith as the prevailing power over their hesitation. Therefore, Joshua sets before them the Lord as the proper object of their faith and the



source of their blessing. The leader of Israel does not simply order his delaying brethren to enter their appointed territories. Such action on his part would have been sheer domination, and the Lord had set His people free from such forced obedience. Therefore, Joshua acts as the Lord's chosen instrument to quicken the faith of these hesitant ones so that by faith they might run the race set before them. It is not by our dutiful submission to domination that we enter into our glorious heavenly inheritance, but it is only by faith's liberating power that we do so.

Wednesday, December 5th - Joshua 18: 3

Joshua's use of the divine designation, Lord, speaks of supreme authority that should be obeyed but also speaks of covenant mercy. That mercy breeds loving gratitude that makes one's obedience to be sweet. In addition, Joshua refers to the Lord as, the God of your fathers. This reference to the patriarchs brings a cloud of witnesses to testify to the blessedness of God's people when they trust and obey their Lord as well as the painful misery that is theirs when they disobey Him or even delay their obedience to Him. Abraham trusted and obeyed the Lord when he offered up Isaac, reckoning that God could raise him from the dead, and he received his son back as a type of the One who would save Abraham and Isaac from death (Heb. 11:17-19). Jacob trusted the Lord so much that he wrestled with the angel of the Lord beyond the painful point of his hip having been dislocated and received eternal blessing as his reward (Gen. 32: 24-28). Joseph trusted the Lord through all of the painful afflictions that the Lord appointed as his portion, and he testified that whatever evil his brothers may have intended against him, God used it for his and their good (Gen. 50:20). In addition to such positive incentives, this reference to the Lord's dealings with Israel's fathers also contains a sobering warning against undue delay in God's people trusting and obeying their Lord. At Kadesh-barnea, the fathers of the people Joshua was addressing had refused to enter the Promised Land, resulting in their bodies littering the wilderness through which they had wandered (Num. 14: 26-35). We have every positive and negative reason to obey our Lord in all things without delay.

Thursday, December 6th - Joshua 18: 3

The final phrase of incentive Joshua uses in his challenge is the one in which he speaks of the territories apportioned for these tribes as being ones that the Lord had given to them. If our Lord has given to us our salvation and all that pertains to it, why do we ever put off our possessing it? The gift is essential for the removal of our guilt, the cleansing of our corruption, the healing of our brokenness, the release from our condemnation, the enjoyment of true peace and lasting pleasure. The gift has been purchased for us by God at infinite cost and conferred upon us freely. The inheritance is ours from the infinite and unchangeable love of God and it is an inheritance that is living, lovely, and everlasting (Ps. 16:11; 1 Pet. 1:3,4). The gift is ours, given to us by our loving and merciful God. It only remains for us to enter into, unpack, and enjoy this glorious possession (Phil. 2:12,13).

Friday, December 7th - Joshua 18: 4-6

Joshua adds to his challenge words of instruction to guide and facilitate the obedience of the seven hesitating tribes. The wise and loving leader of Israel sets out clear and small steps that were easily attainable by the tribes. We cannot obey the Lord for other people but we can minister God's truth, wisdom, comfort, and love to others, so that they are encouraged and fortified to work out their own salvation.

Saturday, December 8th - Joshua 18: 4-6

Joshua calls for three men from each of the seven tribes. Such tribal committees of three would be large enough to share the workload but not so large as to become cumbersome and perhaps develop political factions as the ten spies sent by Moses into Canaan forty years earlier had done. When we are willing to do God's will, our God will see to it that His faithful servants, such as Joshua, will help us to know the divine will and how we might most effectively obey it.

Sunday, December 9th - Joshua 18: 4-6

Joshua calls for an exact survey of the region yet to be apportioned and possessed by these seven tribes. Precision of measurement and description in such matters is always desirable. Yet, in this case it was critical for the avoidance of disappointments and arguments over a vague and inaccurate drawing of the boundaries of the seven lots. It should also be observed that the less focused, committed, and spiritually mature people are, the more they require concrete and detailed direction. Only the spiritually mature can competently exercise discretion. The seven tribes had shown themselves to be at least not as clearly committed to the Lord's calling as were their brethren who had already possessed their inheritance. A word may be sufficient to help the wise advance in the way of God's blessing, but those less mature in spiritual wisdom require a fuller specification of their way.

Monday, December 10th - Joshua 18: 5

This verse makes clear two important matters. The first matter is that the survey Joshua directed was not to alter in any way the boundaries of the territories of the tribes of Judah, Ephraim, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. Those boundaries had already been set and the people of those tribes had already settled into their appointed territories. The second matter was that this surveying project did not require any action from the tribes already settled. Their energies were to remain focused on and devoted to the development of their inheritance and the growth of their characters through their exertions of settling into their territory. While our Lord directs us to look out for the interests of others, He does not direct us to neglect our own interests. As we lovingly help others to bear their burdens (Gal. 6:2), still we must bear our own load (Gal. 6:5).

Tuesday, December 11th - Joshua 18: 6

Once the remaining region of Canaan had been surveyed it was to be divided into seven territories. The overall survey showing the divided territories was then to be submitted to Joshua, first for his inspection and approval, then for his distribution to the seven tribes. Joshua makes it clear, however, that the territorial boundaries as well as the distribution process was not dependent upon his own wisdom and will. Joshua would cast lots for the tribes before the Lord, indicating that divine wisdom and loving design would determine each tribe's territorial inheritance. Furthermore, when Joshua refers to the Lord as our God, he reminds his brethren (and his recorded word reminds us) that our Lord loves all of His people and favors none to the disadvantage of others. Instead, our God lavishes His love and blessing upon us all.

Wednesday, December 12th - Joshua 18: 7

We are here reminded yet again of the provision the Lord had already made for the tribes of Levi, Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh. The two and a half tribes had received their inheritance east of the Jordan. Their wives and children were already settled there and the men of those tribes would soon join them there (Josh. 22). The tribe of Levi would soon receive cities of refuge scattered throughout Israel (Josh. 20), as well as other cities and pasturelands in which they would dwell (Josh. 21). Yet the inheritance of this tribe would not be land but rather would be the priestly service of the Lord. Accordingly, all of the tribes of Israel received varying administrations of the unvarying wisdom, goodness, and love of their Lord. The covenant people had been richly blessed by God and they had no cause for anything but loving gratitude and hearty praise for Him.

Thursday, December 13th – Joshua 18: 1-7

This passage reminds us that the people of God enter into their possessions in Christ at varying rates. Such variations can easily foster impatience in some and resentment in others. Yet when the Lord's people set their faithful focus on the Lord and keep His worship central in their lives, they will find growing within themselves not annoyances with each other but rather the blessed fruit of God's Holy Spirit. Accordingly, they will remain bound together in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22,23). Then the spiritually mature and highly committed ones will not become boastful and lovelessly challenging of their weaker brethren, nor will the weaker ones become resentfully envious of their stronger brethren (Gal. 5:26). Instead, faith will work itself out in love (Gal. 5:6).

Friday, December 14th - Joshua 18: 8-10

These verses appear to be a repetition of what was expressed in vv.4-6. However, the current verses report not only the plan Joshua presented to the seven tribes but also how faithfully the representatives from those tribes performed that plan. Far from their taking offense and becoming defensively entrenched in response to Joshua's challenge, the members of the seven tribes acted in strict conformity with the challenge of their godly leader. It is a beautiful thing to behold brethren provoking each other to love and godly works. Let us learn to be as faithfully loving as the challenging Joshua and as faithfully humble as the compliant seven tribes.

Saturday, December 15th - Joshua 18: 11

From this verse and through to the end of chapter 19 the Word of God records for us the allocation of territories within Canaan to the seven tribes who no longer delayed taking possession of the land their Lord had given to them. The lot of the tribe of Benjamin was the first to come up. Benjamin's territory was situated between that of Judah and those of the sons of Joseph. It was due to the Lord's gracious design that the descendants of Joseph and Benjamin, the two sons of Jacob born to him through his beloved Rachel, should be settled in the Promised Land so close to each other. Yet, in time the strongest allegiance of the tribe of Jacob's youngest son, Benjamin, would not be with the tribes descended from his closest natural brother, Joseph, but rather with Judah, the royal tribe from whom our Savior came. It was therefore also of the Lord's gracious design that the tribes of Benjamin and Judah should share a common border together. Our Lord always places us according to His blessed purposes for us.

Sunday, December 16th - Joshua 18: 12-20

The boundaries of Benjamin's territory are drawn in these verses. A glance at a Bible map showing these boundaries will reveal that the area of the land given to the tribe of Benjamin was one of the smallest among all the tribes of Israel. The figures contained in the second census of Israel show Benjamin's population at 45,600 (Num. 26:41), making it the seventh largest of the twelve tribes who inherited territory in Canaan and east of the Jordan. Yet, unlike the complaining sons of Joseph, who wanted more territory, the sons of Benjamin were contented with their lot. Perhaps the location of their territory between the borders of Ephraim in the north and Judah in the south, as well as the fact that Benjamin's inheritance contained the land upon which Israel first set foot after her crossing of the Jordan contributed to this tribe's satisfaction with its relatively small share in the Promised Land. Quality is almost always better than quantity, especially when the Lord determines both.

Monday, December 17th - Joshua 18: 21-28

The cities contained within Benjamin's territory are listed in this passage. The first twelve cities were located in the eastern portion of the territory. The most famous of those cities was Jericho, which had been demolished by Israel and left as a site that had no practical value but great spiritual significance in

that its ruins testified of the miraculous mercies of the Lord. Bethel was near a mountain on which Abraham had built an altar to the Lord soon after the Lord had revealed to him at Shechem that he was in the Promised Land (Gen. 12:6-8). Jacob had received a vision from the Lord there and gave the city its name that means, house of God (Gen. 28:10-19). The Lord also directed Jacob to settle initially at Bethel upon his return to Canaan after his years with Laban to whom he had fled from Esau (Gen. 31:1). The fourteen cities in this list were located in the central and western part of Benjamin's territory. Most significant of those cities was Jerusalem, which Benjamin shared with Judah (Josh. 15:63). These spiritually significant sites in the territory of Benjamin more than compensated for the relatively small size of that territory.

Tuesday, December 18th - Joshua 19: 1-9

The territory of the inheritance of the tribe of Simeon is described in these verses. There are no regional boundaries traced out because the sons of Simeon did not receive a circumscribed territory. Instead, they received scattered cities in the southern portion of Judah's territory. This curiosity was not a loss imposed upon the tribe of Judah for two reasons. First, we are informed that Judah had received more territory than required for the people of that tribe (v.9). In addition, the area in which Simeon's cities were located was almost entirely desert and wilderness in the southern region of Judah's territory. Therefore, this portion taken from Judah was no loss for that tribe. But is there a reason why the sons of Simeon were so scattered within another tribe of Israel and in such a poor area? The answer is found in Genesis 49:5-7 where Jacob cursed the anger of his sons, Levi and Simeon, due to the treachery and murder they committed against the men of Shechem (Gen. 34). The patriarch specifically cursed his sons by saying that he would disperse them in Israel. The character of this curse is shown to us as being not punishment and condemnation so much as corrective chastisement. We know this because Levi's curse was their blessed scattering through Israel as priests of the Lord, while Simeon is privileged to dwell near and even in the midst of the royal tribe from whom Messiah would arise. Blessed are the chastisements of our Lord!

Wednesday, December 19th - Joshua 19: 1-9

The inheritance of the sons of Simeon consisted of a number of cities. All of these cities were contained within the territory of Judah and most of them were in the southern region of Judah's territory. Scripture lists these cities in two groups. The first group lists fourteen cities but gives a summation of thirteen. Perhaps one of the places listed was not large enough to have been regarded as a city. All of these cities were located in the inhospitable Negev, or southern wilderness of Judah. The second group contains four cities, two of which were in the Negev while the remaining two were on the

Mediterranean coastal plain. Of these named places, only Beersheba and Ziklag are familiar to us. The former was where Abraham and his sons lived for a time, while the latter was associated with David, largely when he was a fugitive from Saul. No remarkable person or event is recorded in Scripture as having arisen from or taken place in these cities after they became the possession of Simeon. Here we may see how the sins of the father at least muted the development of spiritual excellence in his descendants for many generations.

Thursday, December 20th - Joshua 19: 10-16

The territory of Zebulun was bounded by Asher to the west, Naphtali to the north and east, Issachar to the southeast, and Manasseh to the southwest. The area of this allotted region was small but very fertile. Of the cities mentioned most are unknown to us. Gath-hepher was the home of the prophet Jonah (2 Ki. 14:25). Hannathon may refer to Cana of Galilee. Although it is not mentioned, Nazareth was located within this tribe's territory. It was only a tiny village at the time of our Lord's being raised there, and probably did not even exist in Joshua's day. The Bethlehem mentioned in v.15 was not the birthplace of Jesus. That tiny city was in Judah's territory and likely did not exist in Joshua's day either. Both our Savior's birth and His early life were lived in tiny, obscure places that may not have been in existence when the Promised Land was possessed by the tribes of Israel. Our God clothes Himself in such humility that we may overlook Him if we do not see and believe, not by our own sight and reckoning, but by the light of His Word and the precious promises it contains.

Friday, December 21st - Joshua 19: 17-23

Issachar's inheritance is not described by its boundaries but only by the cities it contained. This does not mean that Issachar had no regional territory, but rather Scripture leaves us to understand that Issachar's territory was bounded by Zebulun and Naphtali to the north, Manasseh to the south and west, and the Jordan River to the east. This territory contained Jezreel, which wicked King Ahab used as a summer residence (1 Ki. 18:45,46). The city, En-gannim, has a name that speaks of garden fountains. It is not mentioned in this passage, but En-dor was also in this tribe's territory, and was the city of the witch to whom Saul went for counsel (1 Sam. 28:7). There were natural delights in Issachar's inheritance but the region became more notable for evil uses. May we outshine our natural blessings with the light of God's blessing and fruit of His Spirit.

Saturday, December 22nd - Joshua 19: 24-31

The territory of Asher was bounded on the west by the Mediterranean Sea, with its coastline running from the vicinity of where the city of Caesarea was later built in the south to beyond the city of Tyre in the north. The northern border of Asher's inheritance was the southern border of the Sidonian kingdom. On the east Asher shared borders with Naphtali and Zebulun, while on the south Asher and

Manasseh shared a border. The territory of Asher contained Mount Carmel upon which Elijah vanquished the prophets of Baal (1 Ki. 18:16ff). Jacob prophesied that Asher would be rich and would provide royal dainties (Gen. 49:20). Abundant seafood and agricultural produce were easily available to this tribe from the location and quality of its territory.

Sunday, December 23rd - Joshua 19: 32-39

The territory of the sons of Naphtali was situated to the east of Asher's territory. Its northern border began at the northeastern corner of Asher's territory and ran east to the Jordan River. From there the Jordan running south to the Sea of Galilee and continuing south around the western shore of the Sea of Galilee served as Naphtali's eastern border. Issachar and Zebulun bounded Naphtali on the south. The remarkable features of Naphtali's inheritance were the fortified cities contained within it (vv.35ff) and the fertility and natural beauty of its eastern border on the western side of the Sea of Galilee. This was fitting fulfillment of Jacob's prophecy that Naphtali would be a doe let loose, giving beautiful words (Gen. 49:21). No more beautiful words were ever spoken in Naphtali than were those spoken by Jesus in Capernaum and other places around and even on the Sea of Galilee that bordered Naphtali's land.

Monday, December 24th - Joshua 19: 40-48

Dan's territory was initially set in the southwestern part of Canaan. Its western border ran about fifteen miles from Judah's border in the south and Manasseh's border in the north along the Mediterranean coast. One of the cities on that coast was Joppa, from which Jonah sailed on a ship in defiance of his instruction from the Lord to prophesy doom to Ninevah (Jon. 1:3). Joppa also figured in the lives of such characters as Tabitha, whom Peter raised from the dead (Acts 9:36-43) and from where Cornelius requested Peter to come to him in Caesarea to confer upon him and other Gentiles there the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 10). Ephraim and Benjamin bordered Dan on its eastern side while Judah bordered Dan's south. In addition to this region, the sons of Dan attained by military conquest a sliver of land in the extreme northeast corner of Canaan. The main city there, Leshem, the Danites renamed Dan, and it became with Beersheba in the far south of Canaan one of the two poles commonly marking the extremities of the Promised Land.

Tuesday, December 25th - Joshua 19: 49-51

When Joshua, the faithful leader of Israel, had apportioned all of the Promised Land to his brethren, he whose godly character and service had so enriched Israel was not to be left without provision from the people of the covenant nation. Joshua served his brethren according to the command of the Lord, and now his brethren serve him by giving to him an inheritance in Israel by the command of the Lord. The gift from the sons of Israel was indefinite and left for Joshua to specify by his asking. Accordingly, Joshua asked for a city in the highlands to the north of the highland dwelling of his faithful co-laborer, Caleb. In

every way, these two men had served to exalt the Lord and enrich His people, and they, in turn, were forgotten neither by the Lord nor His people. When all members of the Church of God seek to think, act, and serve before the Lord and by His loving and empowering grace, no one is cursed or deprived, but all are blessed and exalted together.

December 2012

Wednesday, December 26th - Joshua 20: 1-3

The land of Canaan had been conquered and apportioned among the sons of Israel. However, the provision for the tribe of Levi had not been made. We have repeatedly been informed that the Levites were to live in cities scattered throughout Israel, having the Lord and a portion of His offerings as their inheritance (Dt. 18:1,2; Josh. 13:14,33; 18:7). The Levites would serve in two kinds of ministry. They would live among the sons of Israel and administer the sacrifices and offerings. This regular ministry is detailed in Joshua 21. The other ministry for the Levites was one of a critical nature. They were to live in and administrate the cities of refuge. The provisions for this critical ministry are set forth in our current chapter. Our Lord calls His people to live righteous lives but He does not expect them to live perfect lives. Within the kingdom of His grace He always makes provision for the imperfect living of His people.

Thursday, December 27th - Joshua 20: 1-3

The provision the Lord calls for Joshua to make arises from the gracious promise He had made earlier to His people through Moses (Dt. 19:1-10). The Lord, who is without sin, demonstrates that He knows more about the pathology of sin and of sinners' reaction to sin, especially in others, than do sinners themselves know. Therefore, the Lord takes gracious initiatives not only in promising cities of refuge, but also in directing their provision for His people as soon as they start to settle in the Promised Land. It would never occur to sinners to make such gracious provision for themselves or others. We who have sin are blinded to its power. Our Lord understands our propensity to injure and even kill one another, and only He can make provision to heal such wounds. We are experts at hurting one another but are powerless to heal. Only God in Christ can heal the wounds of both sinners and those injured and even killed by them.

Friday, December 28th - Joshua 20: 1-3

The cities of refuge were for the worst-case scenarios that would occur among the people of God. They would shield those who had killed others without premeditation from friends and family members of those slain who were inclined to seek vengeance. For the intentional murderer, justice required the execution of the murderer (Dt. 19:11-13). However, with the cities of refuge the Lord provided an administration of grace and justice for His people. For the manslayer, there is grace in that he would be



saved by his fleeing to a city of refuge from those intent on avenging his killing. There was also grace for such avengers in that the Lord's merciful shielding of this manslayer prevented them from intentionally killing a person who had unintentionally killed another person. Such rash revenge is a sin from which the Lord would save the avengers. There is also justice in the provision of these cities of refuge. The manslayer who went there was obliged to remain there until he could stand trial before the congregation of the sons of Israel (Num. 35:12). The manslayer was then to be tried according to the stipulations set by the Lord in Numbers 35:16-28. If the evidence given at such trials indicated the defendant to be a murderer, he was to be executed. If it indicated that he was a manslayer, then he was obliged to remain confined to his city of refuge. Thus does the Lord make provision for the satisfaction of His justice and His grace.

Saturday, December 29th - Joshua 20: 4, 5

The cities of refuge provided sinners protection from the penalty of broken law. Even manslaughter is a crime and a sinful violation of the Sixth Commandment. Yet it is the God who gave the Ten Commandments who makes provision for those guilty of this very serious sin to live without their bearing the full force of the penalty they rightly deserved. He does so by His provision of effective refuge for those guilty of having killed someone. The Lord directs the guilty one to flee to the nearest city of refuge and He directs the elders of the refuge cities to grant a hearing to the one who comes there requesting it. God requires His people to consider innocent even a person who had admittedly killed another person, until he could be proven to be not a manslayer but a murderer. Our God is just and the merciful justifier of sinners.

Sunday, December 30th – Joshua 20: 4, 5

Where is the justice and mercy shown to the victims of manslaughter? If they died in the Lord, their dying was their gain (Phil. 1:21). If they died as tares among the wheat of God's covenant people they would face not the accidental moral blows of a fellow sinner, but rather the just and holy judgment of the divine Judge of heaven and earth. There is such divine mercy and justice for those killed by another person because God through Christ holds the keys of death and Hades (Rev. 1:17, 18).

Monday, December 31st - Joshua 20: 6

Although the manslayer was to be confined in a city of refuge, even his confinement was not necessarily a life-sentence. The Lord made provision for the manslayer to be freed safely from his confinement. That provision was based upon the death of the high priest who served when the manslaughter was committed. In this matter, there is not a causative but rather there is a typical connection between the freeing of the manslayer and the death of the high priest. These cities of refuge and all of the high priests of the old economy were shadows of the substance of our salvation in Christ

(Heb. 7, especially vv.23-28). We have in time and eternity the perfect refuge in the person of Jesus Christ, our high priest, and in His atoning work.

Tuesday, January 1st - Joshua 20: 1-6

The cities of refuge were part of the gracious provision of the Lord for His people. They served to save those among Israel who would commit serious and grievous sins. Yet even the refuge cities were imperfect in that they only preserved the life of the sinner by confining him to the city of his refuge until the death of the high priest of his day. These shadows of refuge are precious, yet infinitely more precious and potent is the refuge we have in Christ. Our Redeemer saves us to the uttermost, granting us immediate freedom from our justly deserved condemnation and from the guilt, corruption, and dominion of our sin. While the cities of refuge preserved manslayers they did not preserve murderers. But Christ provides refuge even for the worst of sinners, those who like David and Paul and the thief on the cross had intended to kill and did kill men. Christ also provides refuge for less serious sinners who are in need of salvation because even the least of our sins, committed unintentionally, makes us murderers of God. How great and glorious is the grace of our God that saves ones such as we were and even now are!

Wednesday, January 2nd - Joshua 20: 7, 8

The Lord specified through Moses that there should be six cities of refuge spaced throughout Israel (Num. 35:13), three being in Canaan proper while three were to be located east of the Jordan (Num. 35:14). By this arrangement, three cities of refuge would serve nine and a half tribes in Canaan while the other three cities would serve two and a half tribes. This seems to indicate that those more distant from the heart of the Church would be more likely to commit sin and to be in need of refuge. It also manifests the wonderful truth that our God makes provision to save those most in need of His gracious redeeming mercy. This is cause not for our presumptuous but rather for our praise to God.

Thursday, January 3rd - Joshua 20: 7, 8

The cities of refuge were conveniently spaced throughout Israel. No one in Israel was ever very far from one of these cities. The Lord did not specify the particular cities but left their choice to Israel's leaders. The resulting choice of cities and their locations shows godly consideration on the part of Israel's leaders. The Lord did direct His people to build roads leading to these six cities (Dt. 19:1-3) to facilitate their access to those in need of their preserving power. Even the names of these cities were inviting: Kadesh, meaning holy, Shechem, meaning shoulder (upon which the wounded are borne), Hebron, meaning fellowship, Bezer, meaning stronghold, Ramoth, meaning high, exalted, and Golan, meaning joy. The means of God's saving grace are sweetly inviting and replace our sorrows with joy.

Now the rescue and rest of the sinner is but a call away, for all who call on the name of the Lord will be find refuge and rest in Christ.

Friday, January 4th - Joshua 20: 9

The cities of refuge were a just and merciful provision of God for all of His people and even for strangers and sojourners among His people. These cities concretely manifested the truth that for the redeemed mercy triumphs over judgment (Jas. 2:13). They point to Christ, our perfect priest and advocate, in whom we have everlasting refuge. They indicate that the Church should be a refuge for struggling sinners. Church members should not punish those who sin in their midst, but rather restore them in a spirit of gentleness (Gal. 6:1).

Saturday, January 5th - Joshua 21: 1, 2

Jacob cursed Levi and all of his descendants (Gen. 49:5-7) because Levi was guilty of the treacherous murder of all the men of Shechem (Gen. 34:25-29). Yet the merciful heavenly Father of Levi transformed this curse into a blessing. They Levites would minister as priests of the Lord throughout Israel. Lord made provision for these priestly servants and their families by commanding that the sons of Israel give to them cities and surrounding pastureland (Num. 35:1-8). Only the Father of saving mercy can transform the curse of an earthly father into a blessing for the cursed sons and make their service a blessing for all of His people. This is so because God gave His Son to bear the curse due to His people and to give them abundant blessing in place of that curse.

Sunday, January 6th - Joshua 21: 1, 2

The Levites stand at the end of the line of Israel's tribal apportionments. The Lord's servants are taught by this arrangement not to grasp for the first and highest place, but rather to take the lowly place and to count and treat their brethren as better than themselves (Phil. 2:3,4).

Monday, January 7th - Joshua 21: 1, 2

The Levites approach Joshua and Israel's other leaders to claim a promise and provision of their Lord. They do not claim to be deserving of the promise nor do they require the provision as fair remuneration for their service. Instead, they base their claim entirely upon the gracious allowance of the Lord. These Levites teach us how to regard and request from our God His provision.

Tuesday, January 8th - Joshua 21: 1-3

The leaders of the tribe of Levi came to Joshua, Eleazar the priest and the leaders of the tribes of Israel. This arrangement was fitting because what the Levites were going to ask would affect all of the other tribes of Israel. Although God had commanded that these cities be given to the Levites, the Lord, who loves cheerful givers, arranges it so that the security of the Levites would rest upon His command while the actual giving of these cities would issue from the loving care of the rest of the tribes of Israel. It is good and pleasant to note from v.3 that the Levites' brethren sweetly complied with the claim for these cities. The church members' mutual knowledge of and loving respect for the Lord's provisions prompt compassionate and considerate interactions between those members.

Wednesday, January 9th - Joshua 21: 4-8

These verses list the number of cities the Levites received and the distribution of those cities among the three branches of Levi's tribe: the sons of Kohath, Gershon, and Merari. The total of forty-eight cities was determined by the Lord (Num. 35:7). The selection of which cities were to be given was the result of the lot that was under the superintendence of the Lord. Therefore, the lines of the Lord's servants fell for them in practical and pleasant places according to the loving grace and infallible wisdom of the Lord. By His providence the Lord sets all of His servants in all generations in pleasant and sanctifying places (Ps. 16:6).

Thursday, January 10th - Joshua 21: 9-12

In vv.9-40, we have a listing of the names of the forty-eight cities that were given by the tribes of Israel to the priests and Levites. This listing begins with those cities given to the priests, the sons of Aaron (vv.9-19). In vv.9-12 special note is taken of the first city given to the priests. That is because Hebron had already been given to Caleb. The Lord had specifically promised to him the land on which his foot had trod during the spy mission. Therefore, when Joshua gave Hebron to Caleb, that gift was made in compliance with the promise of the Lord. Yet the first city the Lord required to be given to His priests was Hebron. Was this a case of the Lord giving and the Lord taking away? We must judge these actions by the character of the Lord, whose gifts are irrevocable and we must judge by the character of Caleb, whom God praised and rewarded for his faith. In v.12 Scripture notes that plentiful divine provision remained for Caleb after he gave Hebron to the priests. Also, we cannot rightly imagine a faithful man like Caleb begrudging this gift. Surely he regarded his giving to the ministers of the means of grace to be

no loss but rather great gain. Let us, then, then learn to be cheerful givers to the work and workers of the Lord.

Friday, January 11th - Joshua 21: 13-19

These verses continue listing the cities given to the Aaronic priests. We learn that Hebron was designated a city of refuge. How blessed was Caleb to dwell so near to priests and a city that typified the saving mercies of the Lord! The cities listed in vv.13-16 are those given by the tribes of Judah and Simeon. Recall that the Simeonites dwelt in scattered cities throughout Judah's territory. Of the nine cities listed in vv.13-16, only Ain was given by the tribe of Simeon while the other eight came from Judah. In vv.17-19 the four cities given by the tribe of Benjamin are listed. We are familiar with Gibeon (Josh. 9) and Anathoth, from where Jeremiah would later come (Jer. 1:1). This lion's share of Judah's giving was fitting for the tribe from which the Lion of Judah would come.

Saturday, January 12th - Joshua 21: 20-26

The ten cities given to the rest of the sons of Kohath are listed in these verses. The tribe of Ephraim gave four. Shechem was a city of refuge but also the city located in the heart of Canaan where the Lord first informed Abraham that he was in the Promised Land (Gen. 12:6). The patriarch's experience of entering well into Canaan before he knew he was in the land promised to him by the Lord indicates that believers are often, if not always, deep into the Lord's blessed provision before they even realize it. The tribe of Dan also gave four cities, while the half-tribe of Manasseh gave two. The repetition of Gath-rimmon in vv.24,25 is likely a mistake that is corrected in the later listing of these cities in 1 Chronicles. There the correct city name was Bileam (1 Chron. 6:70). Let Scripture interpret even the mistakes in the copying of Scripture!

Sunday, January 13th – Joshua 21: 27-33

Here are listed the thirteen cities given to the Levitical sons of Gershon by several tribes of their brethren. The half-tribe of Manasseh residing east of the Jordan gave Golan in the far north, a name that means joy which is fitting for a city of merciful refuge. Manasseh also gave Beeshterah, which some scholars believe to have been the capital city of Og's kingdom. Issachar gave four cities and the sons of Asher gave another four cities. The tribe of Naphtali contributed three cities, one of which, Kadesh in Galilee, was a city of refuge, whose name means holy. These cities that are almost entirely obscure to us were well known and loved by the Lord who gave them to these tribes of Israel and by the people of the Lord who gave them to their Levitical brethren.

Monday, January 14th - Joshua 21: 34-40

We are informed in these verses that the sons of Merari's branch of the tribe of Levi received twelve cities. The sons of Zebulun contributed four and the sons of Reuben gave four cities of which one was a city of refuge, although Bezer is not noted as a city of refuge in this list (but see Dt. 4:42,43). It is a stroke of redemptive appropriateness that the tribe descended from the son of Jacob who sinned away his blessing from the father should provide one of the cities that served as the Lord's merciful provision for sinners in vital need of refuge. Finally, the tribe of Gad also gave four cities of which Ramoth in Gilead was a city of refuge. Ramoth-gilead was where wicked King Ahab later entangled good King Jehoshaphat in a war in which Ahab himself was killed by an arrow shot randomly (1 Ki. 22). Therefore at least in that city of refuge a murdering king found no refuge but only what he justly deserved.

Tuesday, January 15th - Joshua 21: 41, 42

These verses summarize the giving of the cities by the tribes of Israel to the tribe of Levi. This giving was in complete obedience to the directives the Lord gave to Israel through Moses (Num. 35:7), and it speaks well of Israel's faithful obedience. It is a good and blessed thing when our faithful actions bring to fruitful realization the promises and commands of our Lord. It is also once again stressed that all Levitical cities had sufficient surrounding territory to enable the Lord's servants to support themselves and their families on what God and His obedient people had provided for them. Such provision freed the Levites from undue worldly avocations so that they could without distraction devote themselves to their ministry. The directives and provisions of the Lord always make wise, effectual, and abundant provision for all of His people.

Wednesday, January 16th - Joshua 21: 41, 42

We gather from these verses not only that the tribes of Israel gave faithfully to the Levites in accordance with the Lord's command. We also learn that the number of cities totals more than what any other tribe in Israel received, except for the tribe of Judah. This indicates how abundantly our Lord provides for both the royal tribe as well as the priestly tribe. God makes such provision so that these leading tribes, that foreshadow Christ's offices of king and priest, would have sufficient resources to rule and to offer sacrifices for the blessing of the entire covenant nation. No less did our heavenly Father provide for His Son when He anointed Him with the Spirit above measure so that He could bear His personal poverty, painful sufferings, and atoning death in order to make His people live eternally in rich and joyful glory.

Thursday, January 17th - Joshua 21: 43-45

Here is a summary of the Lord's faithfulness toward His people. This summary is set out in positive and negative terms. Positively, the Lord gave to Israel graciously and generously. Four times in vv.43,44 the

verb gave is used. The Lord gave them great and precious promises and gave them abundant provision as the fulfillment of those promises. He gave them all of the land He had promised and more than was promised when we consider the territory of the two and a half tribes east of the Jordan. The Lord gave His people power to conquer and possess the land of their inheritance. The Lord gave them the land not as a burdensome responsibility but as a life-sustaining resource for them to live in it and prosper by it. Finally, the Lord gave His people rest (SHALOM) in their territory and on every side of its borders. In the Promised Land they did not merely survive, but they refreshed themselves from their conquering labors and thrived with thankful joy. There is an overflowing fullness of positive blessing for all who are citizens of the Kingdom of the living God of salvation.

Friday, January 18th - Joshua 21: 43-45

The Lord's faithfulness toward His people is stated in negative as well as positive terms. The enemies of Israel did not stand before them. Not a single enemy prevailed in either attacking Israel or defending themselves against Israel. The Lord disarmed and delivered all of Israel's enemies into the prevailing power of His people. The power of Israel's foes failed them in face of the divinely enabled people of God. The promises of God can seem insubstantial in comparison with worldly power and possessions, but not one of the divine promises failed while each and every one of them were fulfilled. Our God has given to us great and precious promises in Christ, and in Christ all of our Lord's promises are yes and amen (2 Cor. 1:20).

Saturday, January 19th - Joshua 22: 1-4

With all of the tribes of Israel having received their territories and with the nine and a half tribes having begun to settle into their territories, the time had come for the two and a half tribes to return to their inheritance east of the Jordan. It is a testimony to the faithful submission of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh, as well as to their love for their brethren, that the two and a half tribes do not take the initiative to claim their release from Joshua. Instead, they wait for the Lord's leader to summon and inform them that they had completed their service. Those who best know and trust in the wisdom and love of the Lord best wait for their good Shepherd to tell them when to lie down in green pastures and when to rise up and follow Him to quiet waters (Ps. 23:2).

Sunday, January 20th - Joshua 22: 1-4

Joshua summoned the two and a half tribes not to assign them more work but to commend them for their good service. The leader of Israel, who was faithful to God and hence no flatterer of men, commends the men of these tribes for their having fully complied with the Lord's commands through Moses. He further commends them for their faith and obedience in their seeing and serving Joshua as the Lord's appointed successor to Moses. In addition, Joshua further commends them for their self-

denying service to their fellow Israelites, especially commending their love when he designates those whom they had served as being cherished by them as brethren. Above all, however, these tribes kept the charge of the Lord's commandment. Whenever we fix our sight on our God and not on men, we perceive the good grace and loving mercies of our Lord and that fill us with loving gratitude by which we fulfill all godly duties with delight and in love for those whom we serve.

Monday, January 21st - Joshua 22: 1-4

Joshua's commendation is followed by his conferring a reward. Since these tribes had served to bring the Lord's rest to their brethren, they could now return to their land with humble yet confident expectation that they too would there enter into the rest of the Lord. In this Joshua bolsters their hope of divine blessing when he designates the land of their possession as the gift of God to them through Moses. We enjoy peace that passes understanding and joy that is unspeakable when we serve our Lord and our brethren faithfully and diligently and find our delight in whatever reward our God deems fit to give to us.

Tuesday, January 22nd - Joshua 22: 4, 5

The rest the Lord gave to His people through Joshua was not that perfect rest God's people will have ultimately in Christ (Heb. 4:8). Because the rest they enjoyed was an imperfect, earthly rest in a cursed world filled with sinful humanity, Joshua adds a challenging exhortation to his commendation of these tribes. They are exhorted to be very careful in their continued trust in and obedience to the Lord and His command. Their release from one form of service to their God does not entail their being given license to live in casual heedlessness of their Lord and His holy law. We learn from this that we often keep closer to our Lord when we are consciously working under His orders than we do when we are left to our own pleasures. These tribes are here released from their warfare against the Canaanites, but Joshua reminds them that they wrestle ultimately not against flesh and blood but rather against Satan's snares and the remnants of their own sin. Without our keeping constant in holy vigilance, we will find that our pleasures wage a worse war against our souls than do human enemies wage against us physically (Jas. 4:1-7).

Wednesday, January 23rd - Joshua 22: 5

The various facets of this exhortation from Joshua call for our careful attention and meditation. He is not vague, merely wishing them well. What he does give to them is an exhortation consisting of seven parts, each one being essential. Joshua here sounds the supreme note contained in all of Scripture when he calls upon the two and a half tribes to love the Lord their God with all their hearts and to love their brethren and neighbors as themselves by their knowing and keeping God's law. Jesus exhorts us in the same way, telling us that the Law and the prophets depend on the commandment to love (Mt. 22:36-40).



Thursday, January 24th - Joshua 22: 5

The first two facets of Joshua's exhortation speak of necessity and duty. It is a vital necessity that those who have been redeemed by the Lord realize that they must work out their new lives in an old cursed and sinful world. Therefore, serious attention is called for in terms of our right apprehension of the duty we have to know our God and to obey His will as He and His will are revealed to us in His Word. How shall we know the great need we have and the great provision our God has made for that need if we are not serious in our study of His Word and careful in our obedience to it?

Friday, January 25th - Joshua 22: 5

While the first two facets of this exhortation speak of necessity and duty, the remaining five facets speak of delight. Joshua moves from our duty to know and obey God's law to the delight of our knowing the living, loving Lord who has given us His law, and by whose redeeming work and sovereign rule over us and sweet regulation of our lives, fills us with a growing love for Him and for others. In such love received from God and given to God we rejoice in sweetest satisfaction and serve for the glory of our God and for the good of others.