

Let's Worship God

8th-13th January 2018

Joshua

The Book of Joshua

THE PROMISED LAND



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Monday -Joshua 18:1-27 - Too Easily Satisfied

Some time after the beginning of the division of the land, seven tribes still had not received their inheritance. They seemed to have become uninterested in God's promised blessing and were making no effort to receive it. Maybe life was too easy for them now compared to days gone by. They weren't facing too much opposition and had become content with their condition. The treasures of past battles gave them a comfortable life. They were settling for less than God had for them.

Many Christians today are also too easily satisfied. We are saved and we know some of God's blessings, but we become comfortable and lazy. Instead of pressing on with Christ, we get slack and sluggish. We make no effort to fight sin; we give no energy to pursuing Christ-likeness. We just drift. Our problem is that we are satisfied with being saved. 'What's wrong with that?' you might ask! It's wrong to be satisfied with being a baby Christian, never wanting to grow. It's like a man being saved from drowning, pulled out of the sea, brought to the beach - and then spending the rest of his life making sandcastles.

Many Christians are happy as they are. They are content with believing the right doctrines but knowing nothing of the power of the Holy Spirit. Correct doctrine is crucial - but it is no substitute for the presence and power and working of the living God. Like the seven tribes, we have a rich inheritance but maybe we're not too bothered about it. There is no unwillingness on God's part to give us spiritual growth and spiritual blessing. The unwillingness to seek and to take it is always on our side. Joshua said to Israel: 'How long will you be satisfied with less than God has for you?' He could say to us: 'How long will you be satisfied with bread and jam when there is a feast available for you?'

Questions

1. What was the problem with seven tribes at the start of this chapter?
2. In what ways are you pressing on in your Christian life?

Prayer Points

1. Pray that we would press on in our Christian life.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

Not one word of all the good promises that the LORD had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass. Joshua 21:45

Praise: Psalm 110:all - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

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Tuesday - Joshua 19:1-51 - Another Pointer to Promise-Keeping

Chapters 18 and 19 give a detailed description of what was allocated to the remaining seven tribes. Remember, all these lists and lists of place names are not boring! It is a thorough account of God keeping His ancient promise to bring His people into a land of their own. By completing the record of the land allocated to all twelve tribes, there is an emphasis here (and in many of the key incidents in the book of Joshua) on the unity of God's people. Each tribe participates equally in the conquest and shares alike in the distribution of the land.

Chapter 19 brings to an end the report of the territory of the nine and a half 'West of Jordan' tribes (see 14:1-5). This section of Joshua began with a specific reference to the granting of an inheritance to Caleb (see 14:6-15) and now ends with a specific reference to the granting of an inheritance to Joshua (see 19:49, 50). This focus on Caleb and Joshua once again drives us back to Numbers 13 and 14. There, only Caleb and Joshua - out of twelve spies sent into Canaan - were willing to put their complete confidence in the sure promise of God to give them the land (look back at Num. 13:30 and 14:6-9). Unfortunately, the negative report of the other ten spies had a contagious effect on the people. However, the LORD promised that these two men would be the only ones from their generation who would enter the land (see Num. 14:24, 28-30, 38), while the rest would die off for their unbelief.

So 19:49-50 is no useless tailpiece. It is yet another pointer on the pages of Joshua to the promise-keeping of the God of Israel. It is a standing witness that the majority may not always be faithful and may not always be right (Num. 13-14). But the LORD is faithful, even if it means preserving His loyal followers from Anakim, chariots and high water to keep His promise!

Questions

1. What challenges you about the faithfulness of Caleb and Joshua?
2. What encourages you about the promise-keeping of God?

Prayer Points

1. Give thanks that God always keeps His promises.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

Not one word of all the good promises that the LORD had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass. Joshua 21:45

Praise: Psalm 111:1-6 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

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Wednesday - Joshua 20:1-6 - The Justice of the LORD

The LORD commands Joshua and Israel to follow through on instructions given to Moses about setting aside cities of refuge. These were to serve as safe havens for those guilty of manslaughter. They were for those who took a human life "without intent or unknowingly". However, justice could not be avoided simply by anyone claiming their actions were unintentional. The killer would stand before the assembly and could only remain in the city if they were convinced that he had not acted deliberately or in hatred.

So we see that our God is a God of justice. God's law and rule takes note of the motives and intentions in such cases. A man without a murderer's heart should not suffer the murderer's punishment of being put to death. Similarly though, facing trial in the city of refuge prevented it from being a means of escaping justice.

Yet even unintentionally taking someone's life was so serious that there could be no release from a person's stay in the city of refuge - except by the death of the high priest. In some crimes punishable by death, the offender's life could be ransomed by paying a price. This option was not available for murder because "blood pollutes the land". Only the blood of the blood-shedder could purge away the pollution and cleanse the land of defilement. The only acceptable payment was the murderer's own life.

Both murder and manslaughter polluted the land and both needed atonement. In the case of murder it was execution of the murderer; in the case of manslaughter it could come through the natural death of the high priest. It seems that in some way the death of the high priest paid the price, atoned for the bloodshed and satisfied justice. The high priest's death could release the offender and bring him back. Surely this is an Old Testament pointer to what Jesus - our "merciful and faithful high priest" - would do for His people.

Questions

1. Who was allowed to stay in a city of refuge?
2. In what way does this passage point forward to Jesus Christ?

Prayer Points

1. Give thanks that Christ is our great high priest.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

Not one word of all the good promises that the LORD had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass. Joshua 21:45

Praise: Psalm 111:7-9 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

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Thursday - Joshua 20:7-9 - The Importance of the LORD's Justice

The danger in these manslaughter cases was that "the avenger of blood" (v3, 5) - a near relative of the slain person charged with maintaining family rights - might kill the offender before the facts of the case could be known and dealt with properly. Then revenge would triumph over proper punishment and greater injustice would be done. So it was crucial that the cities of refuge were easily reached. V7-8 list their location: there were 3 on each side of the Jordan; one in the north, middle and south of both sections. Even the locations of the cities show how available God's justice was intended to be.

The provision of these cities also reflects the values of the LORD's justice. Chapter 21 is shaped by the worth of human life - both the offender's and the victim's. The existence of these cities shows the preciousness of the unintentional offender's life. But the cities also presume the sacredness of the victim's life. They were a place of safety for the offender, but also a place of exile. There was protection but also a penalty. He could not leave the bounds of the city of refuge or he would not be safe (see Num. 35:26-28). So it was a refuge and a prison at the same time. This is the costliness of destroying human life, even if it was unintentional. Life made in God's image is always exceedingly sacred.

V9 shows that even "the stranger sojourning among" the children of Israel was included in the boundaries of the LORD's justice. This is typical of the God of the Bible. He includes the sojourner (or the stranger) within his justice because He has included him in His love. "He executes justice for the fatherless and widow, and loves the sojourner..." (Deut. 10:18). There is a wideness in God's mercy. This is the God who delights to bring near by the blood of Christ those who once were far off.

Questions

1. What do the cities of refuge teach us about human life?
2. What do the cities of refuge teach us about God's love and mercy?

Prayer Points

1. Give thanks for God's love and mercy.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

Not one word of all the good promises that the LORD had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass. Joshua 21:45

Praise: Psalm 112A:1-6 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

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Friday - Joshua 21:1-26 - Learning from Levites

The tribe of Levi did not receive a given inheritance like the other tribes (look back at 13:14, 33). Instead, the LORD had instructed Moses that Israel was to give the Levites cities where they could live and pastureland around those cities for their livestock (see Num. 35:1-8). The Levites weren't the only residents of such cities - they lived among the other Israelites there (e.g. v11, 12). In this chapter we see the Levites asking for what the LORD had authorised for them (v1-3). We can see from Joshua 21 that those who are called to the full-time service of the LORD are to be provided for and supported - and not just with the bare minimum!

This chapter - which may at first glance seem to be yet another long list of place names after place names - has another important function. The Levites were a living parable of something that is true for all Christians. Since they received no land as an inheritance but were only provided with cities to stay in, they were really like the sojourners or the strangers who were also part of Israel's community (see yesterday's notes on v9). A 'sojourn' is "a temporary stay". A Levite's stay in any of these cities was described as his "sojourn" (e.g. Deut. 18:6, KJV). In one sense, since they never owned land, they never put down permanent roots.

This is a picture of what is true of all Christians as we journey through this life. King David, centuries after this, stood before all Israel and prayed to God: "For we are strangers before you and sojourners, as all our fathers were. Our days on earth are like a shadow, and there is no abiding" (1 Chron. 29:15). In Psalm 39:12 David pleaded with God to hear his prayer: "for I am a sojourner with you, a guest, like all my fathers". As New Testament believers, we are "looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God" and we "desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one" (read Heb. 11:8-16 and 13:14).

Questions

1. What do all believers have in common with the Levites?
2. How should this affect how we live today?

Prayer Points

1. Give thanks that we have a heavenly home.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

Not one word of all the good promises that the LORD had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass. Joshua 21:45

Praise: Psalm 112A:7-10 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

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Saturday - Joshua 21:27-45 - God's Faithfulness Praised and Promised

Verses 43-45 are more than just a footnote at the end of the chapter. They are the theological heart of the book of Joshua. They are a deliberate echo of the concerns Joshua had expressed and the reassurances God had given back at the very beginning of the book. v43 summarises chapters 13-21 (taking possession of the land); v44 summarises chapters 1-12 (conquering the land); and v45 could be a theme verse or summary of the whole book.

These verses praise the LORD for His faithful promise-keeping. The writer of Joshua uses what one preacher calls "sledgehammer theology - he simply keeps pounding his point home"! By emphatic repetition he pummels the LORD's faithfulness into our senses! v43: "that he swore to give". v44: "just as he had sworn". v45: "all the good promises the LORD had made". In every case, God did what He said He'd do.

When God first made the promise of the land to Abraham (e.g. Gen. 12:7) it wouldn't have looked likely. It would have looked even less likely when God's people were slaves in Egypt (Ex. 1-15). Even when they were miraculously delivered from there, it seemed as if God's own people had managed to frustrate His promise when their grumbling and lack of faith led to 40 years of wandering in the wilderness (Num. 13-14).

It's only when we see the barriers the LORD smashes in order to fulfil His word - only when we see His promise trampling all apparent obstacles in its way - only then can we appreciate how unstoppable is our God's faithfulness to His promises and to His people.

These verses also promise the LORD's future promise-keeping! Israel's rest came because their enemies were defeated (v44). Rest and peace will lastingly be ours when Christ visibly conquers all His and our enemies. This chapter points ahead to Jesus' ultimate victory (see 2 Thess. 1:7-10) and our eternal rest.

Questions

1. What do v43-45 identify for us as some of the great themes of the book?
2. What future reality is foreshadowed?

Prayer Points

1. Pray for the preaching and hearing of God's Word tomorrow.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

Not one word of all the good promises that the LORD had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass. Joshua 21:45

Praise: Psalm 112B:all - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

The goal of Let's Worship God is to encourage and help you in your worship of God each day.

**God tells us that
Ezra read from
the book of the Law
day after day
and that
the people of God
were filled with joy!**

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