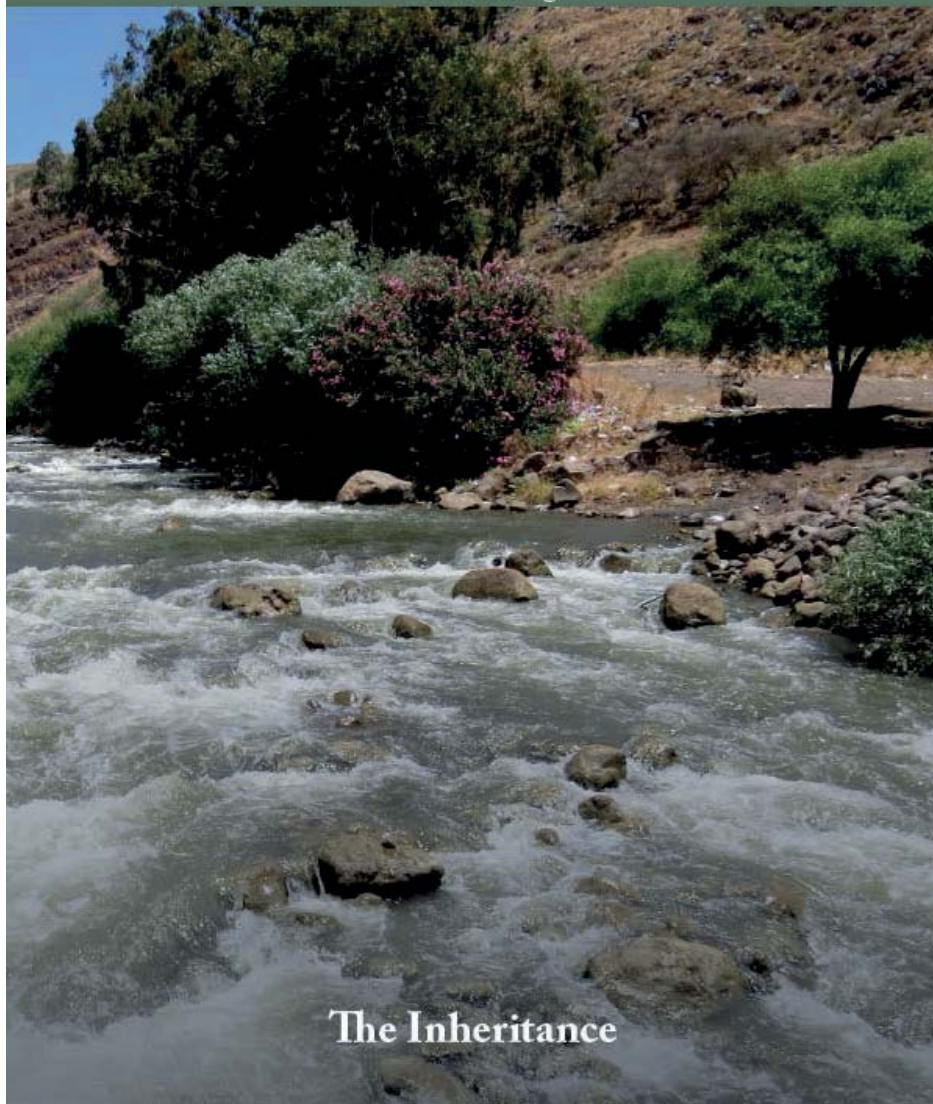


# Joshua Explained & Applied 06

Ger de Koning



The Inheritance



# **Joshua**

## Explained & Applied



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The Inheritance

Ger de Koning

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## Abbreviations of the Names of the Books of the Bible

### Old Testament

Gen	Genesis
Exo	Exodus
Lev	Leviticus
Num	Numbers
Deu	Deuteronomy
2Ko	2 Korinthiërs
Jos	Joshua
Jdg	Judges
Rth	Ruth
1Sam	First Samuel
2Sam	Second Samuel
1Kgs	First Kings
2Kgs	Second Kings
1Chr	First Chronicles
2Chr	Second Chronicles
Ezra	Ezra
Neh	Nehemiah
Est	Esther
Job	Job
Psa	Psalms
Pro	Proverbs
Ecc	Ecclesiastes
Song	Song of Songs
Isa	Isaiah
Jer	Jeremiah
Lam	Lamentations
Eze	Ezekiel
Dan	Daniël
Hos	Hosea
Joel	Joel
Amos	Amos
Oba	Obadiah
Jona	Jonah
Mic	Micah
Nah	Nahum
Hab	Habakkuk
Zep	Zephaniah
Hag	Haggai
Zec	Zechariah
Mal	Malachi

### New Testament

Mt	Gospel of Matthew
Mk	Gospel of Mark
Lk	Gospel of Luke
Jn	Gospel of John
Acts	Acts of the Apostles
Rom	Letter to the Romans
1Cor	First Letter to the Corinthians
2Cor	Second Letter to the Corinthians
Gal	Letter to the Galatians
Eph	Letter to the Ephesians
Phil	Letter to the Philippians
Col	Letter to the Colossians
1Thes	First Letter to the Thessalonians
2Thes	Second Letter to the Thessalonians
1Tim	First Letter to Timothy
2Tim	Second Letter to Timothy
Tit	Letter tot Titus
Phlm	Letter to Philemon
Heb	Letter of the Hebrews
Jam	Letter of James
1Pet	First Letter of Peter
2Pet	Second Letter of Peter
1Jn	First Letter of John
2Jn	Second Letter of John
3Jn	Third Letter of John
Jude	Letter of Jude
Rev	Revelation

## Explanation of general format

PERSONAL PRONOUNS are capitalized when pertaining to Deity.

BRACKETS [ ] are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words which are not found in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek but implied by it.

SHARP BRACKETS < > are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words possibly not in the original writings.

When ASTERISKS \* are used in New Testament quotations, it is to mark verbs that are historical presents in the Greek which have been translated with an English past tense in order to conform to modern usage. The translators recognized that in some contexts the present tense seems more unexpected and unjustified to the English reader than a past tense would have been. But Greek authors frequently used the present tense for the sake of heightened vividness, thereby transporting their readers in imagination to the actual scene at the time of occurrence. However, the translators felt that it would be wise to change these historical presents to English past tenses.

ALL CAPS in the New Testament quotations are used in the text to indicate Old Testament quotations or obvious references to Old Testament texts.

# The book of Joshua

## Introduction

The book of Joshua connects historically directly to book of Deuteronomy. In Hebrew, this book begins with the word “and”, making it clear that history goes on. The history of this book covers a period of about thirty years. Joshua dies when he is one hundred and ten years old (Jos 24:29). He is about eighty years old at the beginning of the book.

The book of Deuteronomy closes with the death of Moses and that is where this book begins. Moses has died and Joshua succeeds him. Someone aptly said: “God does bury His workers, but His work continues.” Joshua does not succeed Moses to lead the people further through the wilderness. He becomes the leader of the people to bring them into the land.

Moses and Joshua are both a picture of the Lord Jesus. Moses is a picture of the Lord Jesus as Servant of God on earth Who went His way through the terrestrial wilderness. As such He is in our time the leader of God’s people on their way to glory. Those who believe follow in His steps as long as they are in the earth: “For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps” (1Pet 2:21).

The wilderness speaks of the earthly circumstances we have to go through and in which the Lord Jesus has preceded us. He shows us that way as those saved from the world by the blood of the Lamb, of which Egypt is a picture.

Moses died, which speaks of the fact that the way of the Lord Jesus on earth came to an end through His death. But the Lord Jesus did not remain in death. He is risen, “having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit” (1Pet 3:18b). And Joshua is a picture of that. The Lord Jesus is glorified by God at His right hand. He is now in heaven.

Joshua, however, is not a picture of Christ glorified in heaven, but of the Lord Jesus Who is in us through and in the Holy Spirit and stays with us. Christ came to us in the Spirit (Jn 14:16-18). He leads us who are now His

people through His Spirit into the territory of which the land of Canaan speaks of for us: the heavenly places. This is the heavenly atmosphere where, while we are still on earth, we are connected with Him and where we may enjoy all that God has given us on the basis of His work.

The first part of the book describes the struggle that the people of Israel must fight to conquer and take possession of the land of Canaan. In the second part, it is mentioned how the land is divided among the tribes.

The Christian also has a struggle to fight, but that is a spiritual struggle. He has also received blessings to enjoy. In the New Testament, in the letter to the Ephesians, we can read about this. The Christian is blessed “with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly [places] in Christ” (Eph 1:3). The devil and his angels want to try to prevent the Christian from also enjoying those blessings. That gives rise to struggle. At the end of the letter to the Ephesians is spoken about that struggle and how victory can be achieved (Eph 6:10-20).

Canaan is not a picture of heaven, where the Christian goes after his death. Heaven cannot be conquered by one’s own struggle. We can only enter heaven by faith in the Lord Jesus.

In this book the struggle is depicted in all kinds of histories. Therein are important spiritual lessons for us. The most important lesson is that Joshua is the leader. Joshua is the Hebrew name for Jesus. In our spiritual struggle we must pay attention to our Leader, the Lord Jesus, “the author and perfecter of faith” (Heb 12:2).

The events described in the book of Joshua are all meant for us: “These things happened as examples for us” (1Cor 10:6). It can be compared to the book of Acts, which is also a book of the beginning. We also see the future of Israel in this book, when all God’s plans are fulfilled and the enemies are completely expelled.

### The Training of Joshua

Joshua was born in slavery in Egypt. His parents gave him the name Hoshea, which means ‘salvation’. In so doing they have shown faith in God’s promise of the delivery of His people. Moses has changed his name. He calls “Hoshea the son of Nun, Joshua” (Num 13:16b). Joshua means ‘the LORD



saves'. Joshua belongs to the tribe of Ephraim and is the firstborn son of Nun (1Chr 7:20,27). That he is the firstborn son and still alive means that he owes his life to the hiding behind the blood of the lamb (Exo 12:12-13).

The first mention of Joshua is linked to fight (Exo 17:9-10a). This is the first aspect in his training and formation to the leadership he takes over from Moses. Amalek is the opponent and is a picture of the flesh that wants to thwart us from the beginning of our journey to the promised land.

Just as David's first action is characteristic of his further career – the killing of Goliath – so it is with the first mention of Joshua as leader in the fight against Amalek. The final victory is certain, but he must fight for it. Faith supports him in this. Through the vicissitudes of the fight, he learns to be dependent on Moses on the mountain, that is, on God, and through dependence he achieves victory (Exo 17:10b-13).

The second time Joshua is mentioned is when he goes up the mountain with Moses, who is going to meet God and receives the law from Him: "So Moses arose with Joshua his servant, and Moses went up to the mountain of God" (Exo 24:13). Nobody is allowed to touch the mountain, but Joshua is allowed to go along with Moses. Here we see Joshua close to God, in His presence. That aspect is also important for the forming of this young servant. The warrior from below is connected with the glory on high. Fellowship with God increases the knowledge of the thoughts of God.

The third time we hear about Joshua when he descends from the mountain together with Moses. The sin with the golden calf has taken place. Joshua hears the sound and draws the wrong conclusion: "Now when Joshua heard the sound of the people as they shouted, he said to Moses, "There is a sound of war in the camp"" (Exo 32:17). His ear is not yet as exercised as that of Moses who knows how to correctly interpret the sound.

Joshua learns to see what really happened in the camp. That's why we find him with Moses in the tent that Moses pitched outside the camp: "His servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent" (Exo 33:11b). With Moses he takes a place of separation from the people and to God.

Taking a place of separation is no guarantee that no new mistakes will be made. Joshua stands up for Moses – or is it more for himself? – when two

men do not respond to the call of Moses to come to the tent of meeting. Those two men stay in the camp and prophesy there. In Moses' reaction we notice the special, spiritual mindset of this man of God: "But Moses said to him, "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the LORD's people were prophets, that the LORD would put His Spirit upon them!" (Num 11:29; cf. Mk 9:38-39).

A sixth occasion where we meet Joshua is in the account he gives of his spying out of the land: "Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, of those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes; and they spoke to all the congregation of the sons of Israel, saying, "The land which we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land"" (Num 14:6-7). Here we see that Joshua knows the land and so knows where he will lead the people. He has been there and bears witness to it. He has learned to appreciate it and knows the power of God to put the people in possession of it.

#### Joshua, the new leader of the people

Then comes the moment when Moses fails and as punishment is not allowed to enter the land. He must appoint Joshua as his successor. But the real reason that God is angry with Moses is with the people: "The LORD was angry with me also on your account, saying, 'Not even you shall enter there. Joshua the son of Nun, who stands before you, he shall enter there; encourage him, for he will cause Israel to inherit it'" (Deu 1:37-38).

This is how it happened to the Lord Jesus. God is angry with Him – in the three hours of darkness on the cross – because of our sins, these are the sins of all who believe in Him. He has gone into death. But He also rose from the dead and now leads us through His Spirit.

Moses must appoint Joshua as a man in whom the Spirit works: "So the LORD said to Moses, "Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him"" (Num 27:18). Moses must lay his hand on him, which indicates identification. Joshua must also stand before Eleazar the priest (Num 27:19). The service of Joshua is inseparable from that of Eleazar. Moses never spoke about Aaron in this way. Eleazar is high priest in the land.

The Lord Jesus is our High Priest in heaven. In order to enter the heavenly land, we depend on His work as High Priest. The Spirit of the Lord Jesus is in us and the Lord Jesus is as High Priest for us in heaven. Joshua gets from the glory of Moses. Christ, as He was on earth, and Christ in the Spirit, is the same Person: "Now the Lord is the Spirit" (2Cor 3:17a).

Moses and Joshua are two persons, but represent to us the one Christ. In Deuteronomy 31 Moses encourages Joshua with words that also occur in Joshua 1, but from the mouth of the LORD Himself (Deu 31:7; Jos 1:6). In Deuteronomy 34 we hear from Joshua the fulfillment of what God has said in connection with the death of Moses (Deu 34:9).

As to our wilderness journey we always have the Lord Jesus as Guide before our eyes in the mind described in Philippians 2 (Phil 2:5-8). But when it comes to going into the land, we are dealing with the Lord Jesus in the Spirit. He comes to us in the Spirit (Jn 14:18) to direct our eyes to the Lord Jesus in glory. So we see Him in Philippians 3 (Phil 3:12-14,20-21).

#### A Division of the book

1. The passage through the Jordan (Joshua 1-5).
2. The conquest of the land (Joshua 6-12).
3. The division of the land (Joshua 13-21).
4. Return of the two and a half tribes to the wilderness side of the Jordan (Joshua 22).
5. Farewell speech of Joshua and his death (Joshua 23-24).

# Joshua 1

## Introduction

Joshua takes the place of Moses. Moses, the lawgiver, does not bring the people into the land. For this great task Joshua is encouraged by the LORD, Who says: "I will be with you" (verses 5,9). Joshua hears three times: "Be strong and courageous" (verses 6,7,9). If we want to take possession of our blessings, the Lord Jesus says to us: "I am with you always" (Mt 28:20).

But first the Israelites must stay with the Jordan for three days. The Jordan is the river of death and depicts the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Israel has to cross the Jordan to enter the land. This is how it must become clear to us that it was only through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus that we gained access to the blessings of the land.

## **Verses 1-4 | The LORD Pledges the Land to Joshua**

*1 Now it came about after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' servant, saying, 2 "Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel. 3 Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses. 4 From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and as far as the Great Sea toward the setting of the sun will be your territory.*

Before the land can be entered, the death of Moses is necessary. It is not God's purpose that His people inherit the blessing in connection with Moses, i.e. on the basis of the law. The Christian is not given the blessing by the law either. Receiving every blessing takes place on the basis of grace. The awareness of this gives strength to follow the new Leader, the risen and glorified Christ.

Yet after the death of Moses there is still a certain connection between Moses and Joshua. Joshua is here, after the death of Moses, also called "Moses' servant". The name of 'Moses' still appears around sixty times in the book

of Joshua. Moses retains his place, however, not as a living mediator, but as the written Word of God.

The Spirit came from heaven as the Servant of the Lord Jesus on earth, after the Lord Jesus went to heaven, that is to say after His glorification (Jn 7:39). Everything He shows to God's people on earth He takes of all that belongs to the Lord Jesus to disclose it to us (Jn 16:14). The Holy Spirit takes the place of a Servant. He wants to show us the fruits of the promised land. For that He uses the written Word.

All that Moses commanded in the Name of God are clear words from God. Joshua represents the strength the people have at their disposal to take possession of what has been promised. The believer possesses God's Word. The Holy Spirit gives the believer the power to enter the heavenly blessings and take them into his possession.

Canaan is a picture of heaven. That is well known. But often people only think that we enter into it when we leave this earthly life. If that were so, we wouldn't be able to have any profit of most of the book. How should we think about the struggle? We are in a book of struggle that is necessary to conquer the land. Without struggle no land. This can never apply to the believer's passing away, because when the believer passes away, there is immediately rest. In case of unfaithfulness, the people can be driven out of the land again, which is also impossible to say of a believer who has gone to heaven – better: paradise – after he has fallen asleep.

The New Testament counterpart of the book of Joshua is the letter to the Ephesians. It tells us that we are in the heavenly places in the Lord Jesus and that through our connection with Him we share in everything that is His part by virtue of His work on the cross. The land is the heavenly atmosphere in which we already find ourselves and where we can enjoy everything we have received in Christ. All the blessings we have received are in connection with a heavenly Christ. We, the believers of the church, are His body. We are already in heaven because we are in Him. But in the book of Joshua it is about taking possession of what we already possess in principle and to actually live in it.

The land is a gift from God to His people. He gives it to them, or rather "have given it to you" (verse 3), for it is a counsel of God, and then it is cer-

tain. Then there is no question of what He is going to give, but of what He has already given. What His people must do is to take possession of it. You can know that you are rich by an inheritance you have received. Yet it is of no use if you do not take possession of that inheritance and enjoy it. So it is with our spiritual riches. They are our property, but in order to enjoy them we must take possession of them by putting our foot on them (Deu 11:24).

The only way to enter the land is through the Jordan. The Jordan is, as said, the river of death. But just as entering the land does not happen because of the bodily death of the believer, so going through the Jordan does not represent the bodily death of the believer. The Jordan represents the death and resurrection of Christ. Through the death and resurrection of Christ, the believer is now in the heavenly places. To actually enjoy the blessings that are there, the believer must be aware that he died and rose with Christ (Eph 2:4-6).

The land is vast. As it is presented here (verse 4), Israel never possessed it. At the end of the book there is still a lot of land left. That also applies to us. There is always new territory to take possession of. We “know in part” (1Cor 13:9) and take possession in part. When, with the coming of the Lord “the perfect comes” (1Cor 13:10), we will have a better understanding of the extent of our blessings.

The borders of the land are formed by a “wilderness” in the south, the great mountain “Lebanon” in the north, “the great river, the river Euphrates” in the east and “the Great Sea” in the west. Between them live “the Hittites”. They are one of the seven nations living in Canaan, and in them all these nations are represented. They are the only ones mentioned here, probably because they are the most fearsome enemies.

The borders indicate what lies outside the promised land and on which the people should not therefore put their foot. These boundaries represent the different characteristics of the world: the aridity of the wilderness, power symbolized by a mountain, prosperity symbolized by a river and turbulence and tribulations represented in the sea. The believer must be careful not to cross these borders.

We are also weak in the fight. It is a great privilege to read and prayerfully study God’s Word in order to take all these blessings into our hearts and

to work them out in our lives. We can gratefully use comments in which others tell us what they have discovered and enjoyed about blessings.

There is also another side. The enemy is not sitting still and wants to drive us out of the land. We see this in the actions of the kings of Canaan. The enemy is stirring when he whispers to us not to devote our time to Bible study because there are other, more important things. Or he tries to seduce us to sin. He will do everything to keep us away from being engaged with the glorified Lord in heaven.

Fortunately, we are not at the mercy of the enemy. We have the true Joshua, that is Christ through His Spirit, with us. If we sow to the Spirit, we will reap the fruits of the land. That fruit is eternal life: "The one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life" (Gal 6:8b).

### Verses 5-9 | Encouragement and Exhortation

*5 No man will [be able] to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. 6 Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. 7 Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. 8 This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success. 9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."*

God has promised to give His people the land. Nevertheless, every Israelite must make an effort to conquer the land. God wants His people to make an effort for it, while He gives the people the strength to fight. God takes possession of the land by letting His people conquer it.

If we want to take possession of our blessings, we will meet resistance. On the territory where our blessings are, there are also enemies who want to prevent us from taking possession of our blessings. Everywhere we want to put our foot on, an enemy will appear. Therefore the encouragement that the Lord Himself is with us sounds (Deu 31:8).

Although Joshua is a courageous man, he is still encouraged. He has to deal with a powerful enemy that should not be underestimated. Encouragement comes to us, not to the Lord Jesus or the Spirit, but to us in whom the Spirit dwells. He is with us with His Spirit on earth and He is our High Priest in heaven.

He will not “fail” us. This means that He will not fail and will never disappoint us. He will not “forsake” us. That is, He will never leave us alone. This promise is of general application to the believers in view of the daily walk and what is necessary for it: “For He Himself has said, “I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you”” (Heb 13:5b).

He still gives another means of victory over the enemy and that is the Word of God, represented in the law. We need to examine the Word to know our blessings, but here it is about obeying the Word. If we don’t do that, there is no strength to fight the enemy. There must be no opening in our armor on which the enemy can point his arrow. We must reflect on the Word, not to serve others in the first place, but to know for ourselves how the Lord wants us to live.

Joshua has a responsible task. He is the leader of a great people. He can only govern that people well if he also lets himself be governed well by the authority that is above him. Therefore he must listen to God’s Word. Then the commands and the justice from his mouth will guide the people on the right path.

“Shall not depart from your mouth” means that we make God’s Word our words and do not wish to express our own thoughts (Isa 8:20). This is only possible if we find joy in the Word and meditate on it “day and night” (Verse 8; Psa 1:2). Then “the Word of Christ” will “richly dwell” in us (Col 3:16a). Meditate on it is not reading a chapter or a verse in our quiet time and carrying it with us all day as a kind of mascot. It is a complete rule of the Word on our entire life, so that all our activities are governed by it. Then we will be prosperous and achieve our goal.

When we meditate on God’s Word, we hear that God commands that we shall be strong and courageous. We have no reason to fear if the almighty God is with us. God has made His promise to give us the land. Then it is an insult to Him if we start to doubt that.



## Verses 10-11 | Command to the Officers

*10 Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, 11 "Pass through the midst of the camp and command the people, saying, 'Prepare provisions for yourselves, for within three days you are to cross this Jordan, to go in to possess the land which the LORD your God is giving you, to possess it.'"*

Joshua obeys immediately. The people must prepare themselves for the passage through the Jordan. With this message Joshua sends the officers to the people. He does not give any indication about how the people will go through the Jordan. He has seen how the LORD opened the Red Sea forty years ago, and he trusts that the same will happen to the Jordan. Therefore he says in full faith that within three days they will cross the Jordan.

He is, together with Caleb, the oldest of the people. But his faith and enthusiasm for the land have not diminished. After spying out the land, he encouraged the people at the time to trust in the LORD – which they did not do then. Just like then, he now speaks with certainty and passionately to his much younger peers about crossing the Jordan to take possession of the land.

The preparation should take three days. The period of ‘three days’ can often be linked to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. He rose up on the third day, proving that He has conquered death. The crossing takes place on that third day. The two preceding days are days of preparation.

In order to pass through, they have to prepare provisions, that is food for the way. This food is not given by the officials. The people themselves must take care of this. This speaks of the fact that we need to take spiritual food in order to be able to start the crossing. It means here that we are engaged in and reflect upon the meaning of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus and our death and resurrection with Him, through which we make it our own.

## Verses 12-15 | The Two and a Half Tribes

*12 To the Reubenites and to the Gadites and to the half-tribe of Manasseh, Joshua said, 13 "Remember the word which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, saying, 'The LORD your God gives you rest and will give you this land.' 14 Your wives, your little ones, and your cattle shall remain in*

*the land which Moses gave you beyond the Jordan, but you shall cross before your brothers in battle array, all your valiant warriors, and shall help them, 15 until the LORD gives your brothers rest, as [He gives] you, and they also possess the land which the LORD your God is giving them. Then you shall return to your own land, and possess that which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you beyond the Jordan toward the sunrise."*

After the journey through the wilderness, as the land approached, the people, by God's command, began to inherit the wilderness side of the Jordan. The Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh were satisfied with this and said that they did not want to go into the land. However, this is not in accordance with God's purpose. The wilderness side of the Jordan is not the promised land. It is not the land conquered by Joshua. It is not the place of the testimony of the power of God's Spirit.

The wilderness side of the Jordan is an area that represents blessings on earth which we also receive thankfully from God's hand, but not just to be satisfied with them. Many Christians are content with the earthly blessings, without having any idea of the true blessings of the Christian.

These tribes have been given permission to live in the wilderness side of the Jordan on the condition that they go along to conquer the land. This they promised (Num 32:31-33). Now they go with them into the land, even in the front ranks. They will help to conquer the land, but when they have done so, they will return to their inheritance.

It speaks of believers who sometimes fight for the blessings, but above all enjoy the peace in their family and work, grateful for everything the Lord has given them. Only the men go over, leaving behind their wives and children. Spiritually speaking, they have never understood anything about the death and resurrection of Christ. These tribes were later the first to be led into the scattering.

The crossing of the Jordan of these two and a half tribes, represents in picture the Christian who believes in the fact of the death and resurrection of Christ, but for whom this fact has no effect on the life of faith. Such Christians will fight against the rising unbelief and power of satan working in the world without realizing, however, that the struggle is actually taking place in the heavenly places.

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**Verses 16-18 | The Willingness of the People**

*16 They answered Joshua, saying, "All that you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. 17 Just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you; only may the LORD your God be with you as He was with Moses. 18 Anyone who rebels against your command and does not obey your words in all that you command him, shall be put to death; only be strong and courageous."*

It seems that what is said here is said by the whole people and not just by the two and a half tribes. They all warmly acknowledge Joshua's leadership as the successor to Moses and express their unconditional obedience to him. They will do without objection what he asks of them and go where he wants them to go. All the people wish Joshua that the LORD his God be with him, as He was with Moses. With this they show that also for them the strength for the fight lies with the LORD.

Recognizing leadership is also important in the church (1Thes 5:12-13a). It is not about recognizing people-appointed leaders. God's Word doesn't know such leaders (cf. Gal 1:1). God gives leaders formed by Himself.

There is no attempt by the two and a half tribes to evade their earlier promise, made to Moses. They speak good, honest and worthy words. It shows pride if we look down on them because they are only there to fight for the land and not for its possession. The question is whether we are fighting to take possession of the land. Although they are not an example to us in sharing God's desires, they are a good example in fight.

## Joshua 2

### Introduction

Before the crossing takes place, we meet Rahab in this chapter. The New Testament speaks about the “faith” of “Rahab the harlot” and about the “works” of “Rahab the harlot”:

“By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace” (Heb 11:31).

“In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?” (Jam 2:25).

Rahab connects herself with the people of God even before they have gained a victory. By her attitude she gives up her connection with Jericho. She believes that the judgment comes on the city. But she also believes in the mercy of God. Her request to save her whole family from judgment was met.

We need this kind of faith to enjoy the blessings God has given us. On the one hand we belong to the church of God and on the other hand we separate from the world which is under judgment. To make this true, it must be a reality for us what Rahab says in verse 11b: “For the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.”

Besides the practical application for us, in the history of Rahab there is also an application for the future for the people of Israel. The same can be done with the book of Acts, in which the origin and the first years of the church are described. Before the people enter the land, God shows us in Rahab that He thinks also of the Gentiles to enter into His people.

When God’s people are about to take possession of the blessing, this history shows that God also opens up this blessing to the Gentiles. Rahab belongs to “the Gentiles in the flesh” who have no right to or share in anything (Eph 2:11-12), but to whom the blessing of God comes as well as to His earthly people. And among these Gentiles she takes a place that is abhorrent: that of a harlot. In her incorporation into the people of God, God’s grace shines in a great way.

In the passage through the Red Sea we don't see a figure like Rahab, because after that journey the people enter the wilderness. The wilderness is not part of God's counsels. When God speaks to Moses from the bush about His plan to lead the people out of Egypt and bring them to the promised land, He does not speak about the wilderness either (Exo 3:4,8).

The land is the land of blessing. The people are on the verge of entering into the counsels of God, which contain only blessings. And when it comes to blessing, God involves the Gentiles and they may participate in it. It is as with the law and grace. The law is given to one people: Israel. Grace is not limited to one people, but goes further: to all people. Thus, all people can participate in God's blessing if they have a faith like that of Rahab.

When Israel will be in the land in the future, after it has been converted, there will also be a great mass of nations sharing in the blessing. The nations will be given a share in these blessings through the messengers which the Lord will send out (Mt 25:31-40). The beginning of the church also shows that the nations are given access to the blessing (Acts 8:26-39; 10:44-48).

The first application is that God in the present Christian time gathers His people from all nations to connect them with the glorified Head, Christ, in heaven. The church, the body of Christ, is not only connected with Him, but made one with Him in heaven. That is why we have our place there.

In the book of Acts the first Gentiles of whom we read that they come to faith are those with a high social position. We read about a eunuch who is the treasurer, or minister of finance, of the queen of Ethiopia (Acts 8:27) and about a Roman centurion (Acts 10:1). But here a harlot is presented to us. So she is mentioned twice in the New Testament (Heb 11:31; Jam 2:25). That she is taken up in God's people shows God's special grace. That grace shines all the more when we notice that she even becomes the ancestor of the Lord Jesus (Mt 1:5).

### Verses 1-7 | The Spies with Rahab

*1 Then Joshua the son of Nun sent two men as spies secretly from Shittim, saying, "Go, view the land, especially Jericho." So they went and came into the house of a harlot whose name was Rahab, and lodged there. 2 It was told the king of Jericho, saying, "Behold, men from the sons of Israel have come here*

tonight to search out the land." 3 And the king of Jericho sent [word] to Rahab, saying, "Bring out the men who have come to you, who have entered your house, for they have come to search out all the land." 4 But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them, and she said, "Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from. 5 It came about when [it was time] to shut the gate at dark, that the men went out; I do not know where the men went. Pursue them quickly, for you will overtake them." 6 But she had brought them up to the roof and hidden them in the stalks of flax which she had laid in order on the roof. 7 So the men pursued them on the road to the Jordan to the fords; and as soon as those who were pursuing them had gone out, they shut the gate.

Joshua sends two spies. This is not necessary to decide on a possible entry into the land. That decision has already been made (Jos 1:11). So why is it necessary? And does not the LORD himself go out before them? Viewing the land is not like it happened from the wilderness before. There it was because of the unbelief of the people. Here it is because God wants to show us that He wants to engage His own as His instruments and that our responsibility remains fully intact. We have to look at the situation we have to face in order to act with understanding and dependence on Him.

By viewing the land, it is revealed that the hearts of the inhabitants of the land have melted (verse 11). To know this will encourage Israel. It is also God's purpose to save Rahab and her family. He has started a work in her heart. The spies are used by Him to complete that work.

The land and Jericho must be spied out. Jericho is the door to the land and must be conquered before the land can be taken. Jericho is a picture of the world. It presents the world as the system through which satan wants to hinder us to take possession of our spiritual inheritance. The world exerts great attraction on us. As long as that is the case, we are weak. We must therefore first condemn it in our hearts, so that we are free from any bondage to the world.

The spies have to spy out the land. Does that mean that we also have to examine the world first, because only then do we know what to turn away from? No. In the way God sends the spies, we see how these two men are doing. In this way we learn the lesson of spying out the world.

The two men enter the land to spy out the power of the enemy. But they don't get to see that power. Instead they met the power of God in Jericho in Rahab. God leads the spies straight to Rahab's house. They did not go far into town. Maybe they entered the first house they can enter. And that's all. They have been only in the house of Rahab. There they saw the work of God in the heart and life of Rahab. God is able to do such a powerful work in that city and in the heart of such a woman. In this way they come into contact with God's work in power and testimony.

This action of God teaches us that, to see the real character of the world, we must look at the cross. In rejecting the Son of God when He is in goodness on earth, we see the true nature of the world. There we also see God's judgment of the world. There is no longer any connection between Him and the world. Whoever sees this, gives up the world (Gal 6:14). This can only be realized by people in whom God has worked the new life. A huge change can be seen in them. First there is love for the world and God's people are hated. Now there is love for God's people and the world is hated. That is the power of the gospel. That power the spies in Rahab. That is why they do not have to go further into the land.

Forty years earlier, twelve other Israelites have spied out the whole land. Ten of them returned in unbelief and "gave out to the sons of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out" (Num 13:32-33). So we have to spy out in the right way and that is: see what God does in lives. That convinces. A God Who is so powerful that He can change people so completely, is also powerful to give the whole land.

It is mentioned of Rahab that "she had welcomed the spies in peace" (Heb 11:31). That is diametrically opposed to the intentions of the king of Jericho. He is looking for the spies to kill them. The kings of Canaan, including those of Jericho, are a picture of the demons. They hate God and His ambassadors.

Rahab lies about the spies. That is her old nature. We should not put this in a good light. God does not bring anyone in circumstances to sin (Jam 1:13). But we should not condemn her too harshly either. What would we do in a situation that involves life or death for others and ourselves? And have men of God like Abraham and David not lied in threatening situations (Gen 12:11-13; 1Sam 21:2) for more selfish motives than Rahab?

With all understanding for the behavior of Rahab it must be clear to us that lying does not belong to the new man, but to the old man (Eph 4:20-25). We are still in danger of showing the works of the old man. What Rahab does is part of the works of Canaan. If she had spoken the truth, God could have somehow prevented her and the spies from being harmed (Gen 19:11; Jer 36:26).

God allows Rahab to lie. He doesn't depend on her lie to save the spies. For the men it is clear which side Rahab is on. At the risk of her own life, she has taken them in. When the soldiers come to catch them, she warns them and hides them. This act is her creed.

Rahab hides the spies because she knows these men are her only hope for salvation to escape the upcoming judgment. Her liberation depends on their hiding. She not only believes in the God of Israel, but here she makes herself one with the Israel of God. She makes herself one with them, while the people still own nothing but God.

Rahab hides the spies under stalks of flax. This has a beautiful spiritual meaning. Flax is the raw material for linen. Linen speaks of the righteous deeds of the believers (Rev 19:8). The fact that Rahab has flax at her disposal and does a good job with it, indicates in the spiritual application that in her debauched life a reversal has already taken place earlier. She has been diligent in the good (Pro 31:13). By doing so, she has in her house means with which she can protect the spies against the murderousness of the enemy.

### **Verses 8-11 | Testimony of Rahab**

*8 Now before they lay down, she came up to them on the roof, 9 and said to the men, "I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before you. 10 For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. 11 When we heard [it], our hearts melted and no courage remained in any man any longer because of you; for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.*



By confessing “I know”, she gives testimony of her personal faith. It shows a greater faith than the ten aforementioned spies. Furthermore, she speaks a confession in the name of all the inhabitants of the land (verses 9b-11a). She confesses that terror has fallen on all and that they all have melted away. This is what Moses predicted when the people were passed through the Red Sea: “No man will be able to stand before you; the LORD your God will lay the dread of you and the fear of you on all the land on which you set foot, as He has spoken to you” (Deu 11:25; cf. Exo 15:14-16).

The mere observation that their hearts have melted away because of what God has done is not a confession of faith that frees them from judgment. We also know from the demons that they believe “that God is one ... and shudder” (Jam 2:19). This belief is not the saving faith as it is present in Rahab personally. Demons are represented in the kings of Canaan. Their faith, like that of the demons, is a belief in the power of God, while they at the same time hate this God. The king of Jericho shows this because he wants to kill the spies. He can only hate God.

Not all people who live in Canaan are a picture of the demons. Many are only slaves of demonic powers. Such a person is also Rahab. For her is hope, not for the demons. Rahab speaks in faith that the LORD has given the land to His people. That brings no hatred in her heart, but trust. She also believes in the LORD Himself and not as the God of any particular people only, but as the God of heaven and earth (verse 11b). This confession is strongly reminiscent of what Moses told the Israelites and what he wants them to take to heart: “Know therefore today, and take it to your heart, that the LORD, He is God in heaven above and on the earth below; there is no other” (Deu 4:39).

### Verses 12-13 | Rahab Pleads for Her Family

*12 Now therefore, please swear to me by the LORD, since I have dealt kindly with you, that you also will deal kindly with my father's household, and give me a pledge of truth, 13 and spare my father and my mother and my brothers and my sisters, with all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death.”*

Rahab doesn't only ask for salvation for herself. Although she is not the head of a family, she still asks for salvation for all of her family. That is

her wish. She makes this known. She trusts in the goodness of God. It is according to God's thought to save families. That does not take away our responsibility to tell them about it. Rahab must also go to her relatives to tell them what is needed to be saved. We must go out to announce the only way of salvation.

Caring for her family is proof that she has already broken with her harlotry. For a harlot, family relationships established by God mean nothing, no matter how much she herself may sometimes claim the opposite. When there is a real conversion, we also notice a desire for broken family relationships to be restored.

There is no valid motive for God we could imagine why someone goes or stays in prostitution. Nowhere in the Bible is there any mention of harlotry with any respect or even understanding. It is always strongly condemned. All sins are bad, but God describes fornication as a special sin (1Cor 6:18). But also for a harlot there is grace. We see that in Rahab.

### Verses 14-21 | The Rescue Plan

*14 So the men said to her, "Our life for yours if you do not tell this business of ours; and it shall come about when the LORD gives us the land that we will deal kindly and faithfully with you." 15 Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was on the city wall, so that she was living on the wall. 16 She said to them, "Go to the hill country, so that the pursuers will not happen upon you, and hide yourselves there for three days until the pursuers return. Then afterward you may go on your way." 17 The men said to her, "We [shall be] free from this oath to you which you have made us swear, 18 unless, when we come into the land, you tie this cord of scarlet thread in the window through which you let us down, and gather to yourself into the house your father and your mother and your brothers and all your father's household. 19 It shall come about that anyone who goes out of the doors of your house into the street, his blood [shall be] on his own head, and we [shall be] free; but anyone who is with you in the house, his blood [shall be] on our head if a hand is [laid] on him. 20 But if you tell this business of ours, then we shall be free from the oath which you have made us swear." 21 She said, "According to your words, so be it." So she sent them away, and they departed; and she tied the scarlet cord in the window.*

When Rahab has expressed her wish, she needs words of salvation. Those words are spoken by the spies. She doesn't have to perish along with the people of Jericho. The means is offered to her. If she really wants to benefit from it, then it is necessary that she believes the testimony of both spies and does what they have said.

Rahab believes the testimony of the men. She also has the faith that her testimony will be accepted by her family. When she tells her family that there is salvation in her house, her family believes her. They come to her house and are saved (Jos 6:22-23). Because they believe her words, they are saved. How are we known; do they believe our testimony?

Long ago, two men, angels, also gave testimony of the judgment that would come upon Sodom to a man who lived there: Lot. They warned him of that judgment and asked him who else he had in his house. When it came down to it, his sons-in-law would not come along. They did not believe the testimony of Lot (Gen 19:14). The testimony of Lot is in stark contrast to that of Rahab. This is because Lot is a believer, but does not live according to that at all, while Rahab has radically broken with her old life and puts herself on the side of God and the side of God's people.

In the two spies who bear witness to salvation, we can see a picture of the two Witnesses God has given us in our time: the Word and the Spirit. God's Word gives us the certainty of judgment and salvation. Rahab has believed what the spies, the witnesses, have said. That is how she was saved. Thus the faith in what God has said gives the certainty of salvation.

The second Witness is the Holy Spirit. The Word and the Spirit bear witness to a Man in heaven. This speaks of an accomplished work. The Lord Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to testify of Him: "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose [it] to you" (Jn 16:13-14). If the enemy wants to attack us, we may look on Him.

Rahab shows two works of faith, both mentioned in the New Testament. The first work of faith is that she had "welcomed the spies in peace" (Heb 11:31). The second work of faith is that she "sent them out by another way"

(Jam 2:25). In Hebrews 11:31 there is talk of her faith. In James 2:25 there is talk of her works in welcoming the messengers, who she sends out by another way. Both testimonies complement each other. Faith without works is dead (Jam 2:17). Rahab proves her faith through her actions.

She lets the spies go in relying on their promise. James speaks of “messengers”, although they are spies. But for Rahab they are men who have come to her with a message from God. They speak words of salvation she needs. She is convinced of the coming judgment, but does not yet know how she can escape it. They told her.

The spies entered through the door, but to leave, Rahab sends them outside through another way, the window. She lets them go, but in the confidence that they will come back. Rahab stays behind with a happy and hopeful heart. She no longer lives by the door, but by the window: she is looking forward to salvation. The window of Rahab is not directed to Jericho, but outward, to the people of God.

The name of Rahab appears in two remarkable lists of names in the New Testament. First in Matthew 1, in the genealogy of the Lord Jesus (Mt 1:5). She is one of the four women mentioned in that genealogy. The second list of names is that of the witnesses of faith in Hebrews 11. In that list, only two women are mentioned: Sarah and she (Heb 11:11,31). In this way she is connected in a special way with the wife of Abraham.

Her mention in James 2 links her to Abraham whose work of faith is quoted in the preceding verses (Jam 2:21-25). Both Abraham and she are quoted by James to show how the present but invisible faith becomes visible through one’s works. Saying you believe is not enough. The confession of faith is only justified if there are works that come from your faith and therefore provide proof that there is real faith present (Jam 2:26).

By the way, the acts of faith of either Rahab or Abraham are not directly acts that are admired by the world. In the eyes of the world, Rahab is a land traitor and Abraham a child murderer. That is why it is not the world that determines what works of faith are, but God.

As soon as the spies have left, she hangs the cord out of the window (verse 21). She does not wait, as the spies have told her, until the people of God enter the land (verse 18). She immediately bears witness to her faith. The

cord means her salvation. In this way she is in contact with the people of God. Her house is on the wall, on the outside. There she lets the spies leave her house. The scarlet cord symbolizes the work of the Lord Jesus. Scarlet is a red dye obtained from a specific type of worm. This is in connection with a statement prophetically referring to the Lord Jesus on the cross: "But I am a worm and not a man" (Psa 22:6).

Scarlet speaks not only of the suffering of the Lord Jesus, but also of His kingdom. Kings go dressed in scarlet. He obtains His kingship through suffering. It is remarkable that the Gospel that presents the Lord Jesus as King, the Gospel according to Matthew, as the only one of the four Gospels speaks of "a scarlet robe" that is mockingly put on Him (Mt 27:28).

The red color speaks of the blood. Not only the words of the spies, but also the foundation of the shed blood gives the certainty of salvation. Rahab and her family hide, as it were, behind the blood (cf. Exo 12:7,12-13).

### Verses 22-24 | Return of the Spies

*22 They departed and came to the hill country, and remained there for three days until the pursuers returned. Now the pursuers had sought [them] all along the road, but had not found [them]. 23 Then the two men returned and came down from the hill country and crossed over and came to Joshua the son of Nun, and they related to him all that had happened to them. 24 They said to Joshua, "Surely the LORD has given all the land into our hands; moreover, all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before us."*

The spies have been in the land for three days. The number three, which occurs more often in the first chapters of Joshua, refers to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. He rose from the dead on the third day after His death (Mt 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; Acts 10:40; 1Cor 15:3-4). To know the blessing of the land, it is always important to remember the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

The testimony that the spies give to Joshua about the situation in the land is the testimony that they have heard from Rahab's mouth and seen in her actions. In her they have seen what God does.

## Joshua 3

### Introduction

The ark occupies the central place here. The ark descends first into the water of the Jordan. Thereby the water stays at a distance and the way is free for the people. At a respectful distance, they pass by the ark, which remains in the middle until all the people have safely crossed over.

Here we see a beautiful picture of the work of the Lord Jesus. He has cleared the way to the blessings of the heavenly land by undergoing the judgment – of which the water is a picture here (Psa 42:7) – for the church. All who belong to the church look at Him with gratitude at a respectful distance for He has turned away the judgment for them by undergoing the judgment for them.

Going through the Jordan is an inadvertent reminder of passing through the Red Sea. If we compare the two crossings, we see that there are some differences. Both crossings are in their spiritual application a picture of the death of the Lord Jesus, but both waters represent two different perspectives of His death. What has happened to Israel at two different times in their history, is different for us in the spiritual sense. At our conversion we went, in picture, through both the Red Sea and the Jordan.

The Red Sea represents the death of the Lord Jesus by which we are freed from the power of sin. The people of Israel come into the wilderness after the Red Sea and that is what the world has become for us after our conversion. The Jordan represents the death of the Lord Jesus by which we entered the heavenly land. The land is a picture of the heavenly places, where we are blessed “with very spiritual blessing” (Eph 1:3).

We are not, like Israel, leaving the wilderness behind us. They are pictures. As long as we live on earth, we remain in the wilderness and also in the heavenly places, but we are not at the same time in both territories. For example, when we work hard and get tired, we experience life in the wilderness. As well as when our (small) children give us a lot of work. However, when we are busy with God’s Word and enjoy the Lord Jesus, we experience what it is like to be in the heavenly places.

There are even more differences between the passage through the Red Sea and the passage through the Jordan. The passage through the Red Sea happens at night – the passage through the Jordan happens during the day. The passage through the Red Sea is a run, with the enemy on the heels – the passage through the Jordan happens in peace, in majesty, where the people go to the enemy. The people go through the Red Sea between two walls of water – when going through the Jordan, the water is kept at a great distance, while in the middle only the ark is seen.

At the Red Sea, Moses says to the people: “The LORD will fight for you while you keep silent” (Exo 14:14). God does everything. He defeats the enemy from whom the people are fleeing. On the other bank they see that God has freed them from the power of the enemy (Exo 14:30). Moses comes first. With his staff he divides the water, so that the people can pass freely.

The truth of this is shown in the letter to the Romans. In that letter we see our life as sinners in the world. There we are added to a dead Christ in baptism (Rom 6:3), just as the people are added to Moses in the Red Sea (1Cor 10:1-2). After our baptism we see the world as a wilderness, the land of death.

In the letter to the Romans we do not read anywhere that we are raised with Christ. For this we have to go to the letter to the Colossians and the letter to the Ephesians. In those letters we read about the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus and His place in heaven now. That is what is represented to us in the Jordan. In our spiritual development the awareness of this comes later. First we only have an eye for the needs of our sins. We have the solution in Christ Who died for us.

Later we discover that we went with Him through the Jordan, that is to say that we get an eye for all that God has given us through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus because of our connection with Him. This requires a quiet consultation of three days. The death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus are enclosed in the number three (verse 2). It takes food (Jos 1:11), exercises in our souls and hearts, to understand what the Jordan means, and then enter the land.

The Red Sea is an exit (Exodus); the Jordan shows that the death of the Lord Jesus is not only an exit, but also an entrance. The exit from the power of death is great and gives joy. But God wants us to enter the land through

the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. As said, this truth is presented to us in the letter to the Colossians and in the letter to the Ephesians. We not only died with Christ (letter to the Romans), but also are raised up with Him (letter to the Colossians) and put in Him in the heavenly places (letter to the Ephesians).

The Red Sea says that we died with Christ. The Jordan says that we are also raised with Him, but with the whole land still before us. Therefore we have to keep seeking “the things above” (Col 3:1-2). The letter to the Ephesians goes one step further and already sees us in possession of the land. The struggle there is a defensive struggle which we see in the picture at the end of the book Joshua.

The book of Joshua can be considered as the bridge between the letter to the Colossians and the letter to the Ephesians. We are made alive and seated in Christ in the heavenly places (Eph 1:3; 2:4-6). We are already in heaven. That is our position. The book of Joshua shows us how we can experience that position, how we can realize what we are. But then we first need to know the meaning of the Jordan. Even after the Israelites have gone through the Jordan, they do not conquer the land lightning fast. First they stay three weeks before Jericho. Everything proceeds peacefully.

All these pictures want us to reflect on the question: What does the death of the Lord Jesus mean? Not only has He taken away my sins, but He has also acquired heaven for Himself and also for me. I will show my answer in the practice of my life of faith. It makes clear what I have seen of this and what significance I attach to it.

### **Verses 1-3 | Instructions for the Crossing**

*1 Then Joshua rose early in the morning; and he and all the sons of Israel set out from Shittim and came to the Jordan, and they lodged there before they crossed. 2 At the end of three days the officers went through the midst of the camp; 3 and they commanded the people, saying, “When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God with the Levitical priests carrying it, then you shall set out from your place and go after it.*

Joshua rises early on that important day with that important event. As the leader of the people, he must take the lead in everything. To rise early is



a characteristic of him (Jos 6:12; 7:16; 8:10), as well as of other leaders of God's people: Moses (Exo 24:4; 34:4), David (Psa 57:8; 119:147), Hezekiah (2Chr 29:20). Above all, it is a characteristic of the superior Leader (Mk 1:35; cf. Isa 50:4).

When the moment for the crossing has actually come, the attention is first turned to the ark: "When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God." Everything is about the ark, which does everything; the people must only follow. In Joshua 3-4 the eyes of the people are on this – the ark is mentioned sixteen times in these two chapters. The people see the blue of the garment that lies over the ark, the color of heaven.

Thus we can only learn what the blessings of the land mean when our eyes are constantly on the Lord Jesus, the Son of God. 'The ark of the LORD' is a picture the Lord Jesus as God, what is represented in the gold of the ark, and as Man, what is represented in the wood of the ark. His Person stands before us. God wants to glorify Him. That it is the ark of the "covenant" reminds us of God's promises.

It is also the ark of "the Lord of all the earth" (verse 11). That shows us that the land belongs to Him. Therefore He can give it to whom He wants. To this end He says after His resurrection: "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Mt 28:18). The ark is also called "the ark of the testimony" (Jos 4:16). This points to God's testimony to us through His Word – the law, the tablets in the ark. In this way, too, the ark is a picture of the Lord Jesus: He speaks to us.

The ark is carried by the Levitical priests. Priests are used to approaching God and being in His direct presence. They represent spiritual believers who can show us this Person through their service. They carry the ark on their shoulders and thus keep the ark high, so that we can see the ark better.

### Verses 4-6 | Distance Between the Ark and the People

*4 However, there shall be between you and it a distance of about 2,000 cubits by measure. Do not come near it, that you may know the way by which you shall go, for you have not passed this way before." 5 Then Joshua said to the people, "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders*

*among you.” 6 And Joshua spoke to the priests, saying, “Take up the ark of the covenant and cross over ahead of the people.” So they took up the ark of the covenant and went ahead of the people.*

The ark goes first into the Jordan. This shows in picture that the Lord Jesus first died. He died first and only then did we learn that we died with Him. Because His death is unique, there is always a great distance between Him and us. This is reflected in Joshua’s command that there must be a great distance between the people and the ark.

We will always have to respect this distance, but we will also be willing to respect it. He is and remains the “the firstborn among many brethren” (Rom 8:29). The distance between Him and us cannot be bridged. It is presumptuous to try that. We must not lower Him to our level or think we are in ourselves as He is.

The way the people must go is a way they have not gone before. The people can only follow the ark on that path. If their eyes are on the ark, they don’t have to fear. Thus there is for us a new and also a living way that has been opened to us through the death of the Lord Jesus (Heb 10:20). We may go this way with joy (Psa 66:6), without suffering the sorrows of death, for He carried them for us. In His love He lets the waters of death pass over Him in all their horror (Song 8:7; Psa 42:7). As a result, He takes us by the hand and leads us on paths where we will see new blessings all the time. We will see miracles.

To see these miracles, consecration is necessary. Otherwise, our gaze is not pure, and we cannot see anything of the mighty work done by the Lord Jesus, and the glorious consequences thereof we will not be able to enjoy. Consecration is necessary to keep our eye on future events (1Thes 5:23). Conversely, looking forward to all that the Lord Jesus has worked for us will have a consecrating influence on our lives: “And everyone who has this hope [fixed] on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure” (1Jn 3:3).

### **Verse 7 | Joshua Encouraged by the LORD**

*7 Now the LORD said to Joshua, “This day I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you.*

Exalting Joshua is also a picture of what happened to the Lord Jesus. What happens to the ark and the people under Joshua's leadership is of extraordinary significance. After the liberation from Egypt and the forty-year journey through the wilderness Joshua brings the people into the land! And how? Through the Jordan, the water of death!

Has not the Lord Jesus become even greater for us now that He is in glory than that we would know Him only as the Savior of our sins? Now we do not only see what He has done away: our sins, but also what He has acquired for us: heavenly blessings. The Holy Spirit has come to tell us of this (Jn 16:13-15).

The glorification of the Lord Jesus by God at His right hand is the proof that God is with Him, as He was with Him during His life on earth (Acts 10:38). He has glorified God on earth. Therefore God glorified Him in heaven (Jn 13:31-32).

### Verses 8-11 | The Ark Must Cross over Ahead

*8 You shall, moreover, command the priests who are carrying the ark of the covenant, saying, 'When you come to the edge of the waters of the Jordan, you shall stand [still] in the Jordan.'* *9 Then Joshua said to the sons of Israel, 'Come here, and hear the words of the LORD your God.'* *10 Joshua said, 'By this you shall know that the living God is among you, and that He will assuredly dispossess from before you the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Hivite, the Perizzite, the Girgashite, the Amorite, and the Jebusite. 11 Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is crossing over ahead of you into the Jordan.*

Joshua has to order the priests from the LORD what they have to do. He asks the priests to come closer, that they may hear "the words of the LORD your God". What Joshua says are the words of God because he passes on what God has told him.

When they go through the Red Sea, it is to escape their enemies. Now they go through the Jordan and that is to meet their enemies and fight against them. God will make Himself known as the living God. He will go out ahead of them and drive out for them the seven nations that claim the land for themselves (Deu 7:1). These seven nations represent a perfection – of which the number seven speaks – in evil.

The living God will visibly in “the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth” cross over ahead of them. His first goal is to go “into the Jordan”. God goes ahead of His people in every way He wants them to go and then goes up with His people (Isa 43:2a). He, Who is the Lord of “the world ..., and all it contains” (Psa 50:12b) because He is the Creator, died first, and then gave the promised land to all who are His people.

The people are called by a “behold” to look at the ark. Thus we are called upon to look at the Lord Jesus Who died for us, to rise again and bring us into our ‘promised land’.

### **Verse 12 | Twelve Men**

*12 Now then, take for yourselves twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one man for each tribe.*

In an in-between sentence the command is mentioned that twelve men must be separated from the people. This is for a service they will only perform in Joshua 4 (Jos 4:4). These twelve men represent the whole people, because there is someone from each tribe. That this is mentioned in the middle of Joshua’s argument about the ark, connects these men in a special way with the ark. They will have continued to listen and watch with more than the usual interest.

We also get a command. Sometimes we don’t know what it contains. But the awareness that we are separated for God will make us look with greatest interest at the Lord Jesus, at His work and what has happened to Him. That makes us spiritually fit for the task that is entrusted to us.

### **Verses 13-17 | Israel Crosses the Jordan**

*13 It shall come about when the soles of the feet of the priests who carry the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan will be cut off, [and] the waters which are flowing down from above will stand in one heap.” 14 So when the people set out from their tents to cross the Jordan with the priests carrying the ark of the covenant before the people, 15 and when those who carried the ark came into the Jordan, and the feet of the priests carrying the ark were dipped in the edge of the water (for the Jordan overflows all its banks all the days of harvest), 16 the waters*

*which were flowing down from above stood [and] rose up in one heap, a great distance away at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan; and those which were flowing down toward the sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, were completely cut off. So the people crossed opposite Jericho. 17 And the priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan while all Israel crossed on dry ground, until all the nation had finished crossing the Jordan.*

Again, attention is drawn to “the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth” (verse 13). Here, the names previously used separately in connection with the ark are used together (verses 3,11). “The LORD” is Yahweh, the God of the covenant with His people Israel. “The Lord” is Adonai, the Lord Who has authority and before Whom it proper for everyone to bow. The faithful God of the covenant, clothed with majesty, enters the Jordan.

The people must have watched breathlessly, in tense expectation of what the water will do with the ark. The miracle takes place before their eyes: the water is completely cut off. The path becomes dry. Access to the land is open. This is the work of the ark; this is what the eyes are focused on. This happens at the city of ‘Adam’. The name ‘Adam’ reminisces how sin and death came into the world. Here death is cut off because the ark blocks the water of death.

At the moment the ark enters the Jordan, the Jordan is fuller than ever. The people enter the land when the harvest is ripe. The proceeds of the land can be eaten by the people. Whoever has seen death in his glory once, also sees the full harvest of the land.

The people can cross the Jordan. When the people have crossed, the water does not flow back immediately. Everything happens peacefully. The priests stand immovably with the ark on dry land in the middle of the Jordan. This immovability shows how the situation completely is controlled by the ark. The water is just as immovable. It stands like a dam. Because the ark is rock solid there, there is no movement in what would otherwise irrevocably result in death. No power is able to begin anything against Him Who is the ‘solid rock of our salvation’.

## Joshua 4

### Introduction

Twelve men each take a stone from the Jordan to the bank. These stones are erected in Gilgal as a memorial for their offspring. Twelve other stones are erected by Joshua in the middle of the Jordan, also to serve as a memorial. The number twelve represents the whole people of God.

The stones in the Jordan are on the place where the ark stood. There is, as it were, unification of the people with the ark at the place of judgment. It is the same for us. The believer is judged in Christ: "In Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ" (Col 2:11).

But the ark has also come out of the Jordan again. The twelve stones on the bank of the Jordan remind the believer that with Christ he died, is buried and raised up: "Having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead" (Col 2:12).

### **Verses 1-8 | Twelve Stones as a Sign for the Children**

*1 Now when all the nation had finished crossing the Jordan, the LORD spoke to Joshua, saying, 2 "Take for yourselves twelve men from the people, one man from each tribe, 3 and command them, saying, 'Take up for yourselves twelve stones from here out of the middle of the Jordan, from the place where the priests' feet are standing firm, and carry them over with you and lay them down in the lodging place where you will lodge tonight.'" 4 So Joshua called the twelve men whom he had appointed from the sons of Israel, one man from each tribe; 5 and Joshua said to them, "Cross again to the ark of the LORD your God into the middle of the Jordan, and each of you take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Israel. 6 Let this be a sign among you, so that when your children ask later, saying, 'What do these stones mean to you?' 7 then you shall say to them, 'Because the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD; when it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off.' So these stones shall*

*become a memorial to the sons of Israel forever.” 8 Thus the sons of Israel did as Joshua commanded, and took up twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan, just as the LORD spoke to Joshua, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Israel; and they carried them over with them to the lodging place and put them down there.*

The water cannot flow back yet, because twelve stones have to be taken from the depth of the Jordan. This must be done by the twelve men who have already been set apart for this (Jos 3:12). They have to go to the place where the priests are still standing. From the place where the priests’ feet stand, they have to take up twelve stones and carry them into the lodging place. These stones should become a sign for them and their children.

The sign speaks of the Lord Jesus for Whom death is over. If later parents and their children walk along the sign and the children ask about the meaning of the sign, the parents can say that this is the place where they entered the land. For us it means that we tell our children that the death of the Lord Jesus gave the entrance to the land. It is a reminder of the fact that He was dead, but has now risen and is in heaven.

The sign is on the bank of the Jordan. The sign does not only refer to the death of the Lord Jesus. It is not just a sign that the ark has been there. The sign consists of twelve stones out of the Jordan. Twelve is the number of the tribes that together make up the whole people of God. Therefore the sign also indicates that the twelve tribes have been in the Jordan. It represents to us that Christ has been in death and that we have been there with Him. Likewise, it represents that He is risen and we with Him. We stand in Him on the shore, in the land of the living.

Are we talking about this with our children? The experience of being dead and having been raised with Christ is not an experience we gain only once in our lives. Once again we have to see the sign on the bank. We will forever see the Lamb “standing, as if slain” (Rev 5:6).

### **Verse 9 | Twelve Stones in the Jordan**

*9 Then Joshua set up twelve stones in the middle of the Jordan at the place where the feet of the priests who carried the ark of the covenant were standing, and they are there to this day.*

What Joshua does here does not seem to have been commanded to him by God. It is something he does himself and does not leave to others. Joshua is a type of Christ in the Spirit. What he does here reminds us that what Christ did in the depths of the Jordan, He did all alone. This act of Joshua tells us that the Spirit also wants to work with us to personally erect a memorial of twelve stones in the depths of the Jordan. We remember that the Lord Jesus was in the depths of judgment for all who form His church. No one has helped Him in it.

This memorial is no longer visible once the water has flowed back. When Joshua walks along it and looks at that terrible water of death, he knows that the sign in that water is where the ark stood. In the same way, we may look at death as the death in which He was, so that now death no longer frightens us. Death no longer has any power over everyone who belongs to the church (Mt 16:18).

As we celebrate the Supper, we look at the death of the Lord Jesus in this way. His question “do this in remembrance of Me” (1Cor 11:24) has to do with His death. At the same time, we know that He, Who was dead, is in our midst as the living One when we gather to proclaim His death. Also Moses and Elijah, when they are with Him on the mountain of transfiguration, “were speaking of His departure which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem” (Lk 9:31). His death will always be remembered by us, we will always be busy with it, not only out of gratitude for our salvation, but also because we have been brought into the land by it.

### Verses 10-13 | The Crossing Finished

*10 For the priests who carried the ark were standing in the middle of the Jordan until everything was completed that the LORD had commanded Joshua to speak to the people, according to all that Moses had commanded Joshua. And the people hurried and crossed; 11 and when all the people had finished crossing, the ark of the LORD and the priests crossed before the people. 12 The sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh crossed over in battle array before the sons of Israel, just as Moses had spoken to them; 13 about 40,000 equipped for war, crossed for battle before the LORD to the desert plains of Jericho.*



Those who entered the Jordan first come out last. They carry the ark, the certain protection against death. After the rest that has characterized all the preparation, the crossing happens fast, “the people hurried”. There is a desire to enter the promised land.

Among the whole people that crosses, there are also the militant men of the two and a half tribes. They are faithful to the promise they have made before (Num 32:27) and of which Joshua recently reminded them (Jos 1:12-15).

### Verse 14 | Joshua Exalted

*14 On that day the LORD exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel; so that they revered him, just as they had revered Moses all the days of his life.*

What was announced by the LORD (Jos 3:7) has now happened. The people have crossed the Jordan and arrived in the promised land. That is an event of unknown magnitude. Joshua has led the people in this. In the same way, it may also penetrate to us how great it is that Christ passed through death, rose up, and went to heaven. The Father glorified Him and exalted Him before our eyes. We will honor Him in His glorification, just as we will honor Him in His humiliation.

### Verses 15-19 | The Ark Comes Up From the Jordan

*15 Now the LORD said to Joshua, 16 “Command the priests who carry the ark of the testimony that they come up from the Jordan.” 17 So Joshua commanded the priests, saying, “Come up from the Jordan.” 18 It came about when the priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD had come up from the middle of the Jordan, and the soles of the priests’ feet were lifted up to the dry ground, that the waters of the Jordan returned to their place, and went over all its banks as before. 19 Now the people came up from the Jordan on the tenth of the first month and camped at Gilgal on the eastern edge of Jericho.*

The staying away of the water depends on where the ark is. If the ark enters it, the water gives way. If the ark leaves the river, the water flows back. The safety of the people depends on the position of the ark. When the water flows back, it seems as if death has not been conquered at all. In the application to us we can see this from the fact that people are still dying, even believers.

Has not the Jordan been conquered then; does death keep its power? The question is answered, in picture, when the people see themselves on the bank of the Jordan in the presence of the ark. Thus death no longer has any power over those who are connected with Him, but only over them alone. For all unbelievers, death is and remains the enemy of whom they will sooner or later be the victims, if they do not repent before that moment. The believer died and is raised with Christ. Death has been conquered. The stones make this clear.

The crossing takes place "on the tenth of the first month". This reminds us of the day the lamb was taken in the houses of the Israelites at the Passover (Exo 12:2-3). Through the Passover, the remembering of Christ's death under the judgment of God as our Substitute is kept alive in the hearts.

God brings them in Canaan five days before the forty years are completed (cf. Num 33:3,38; Deu 8:2; 29:5). God has appointed it this way that they enter Canaan four days before the annual feast of the Passover, on the day that they must begin to prepare themselves for it. He wants to remind them immediately when they enter the land of their liberation from Egypt. That is where the origin lies. When they think about this, they will certainly glorify God as "the Alpha and the Omega" (Rev 22:13) of their well-being and happiness.

The Passover, the Red Sea and the Jordan – all three represent Christ in His work on the cross. In the Passover God freed His people from the judgment that came upon the lamb instead of upon the people (1Pet 1:18-19). The Passover is the beginning of God's liberating action. His liberating action is followed by the passage through the Red Sea, where God judges the enemy of His people.

The Lord Jesus in His death on the cross "disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them" through the cross (Col 2:15) and thereby freed God's people from their captivity. His liberating act has been completed in the passage through the Jordan. There God acted with the ark as a picture of His Son, both in the judgment of death and in the resurrection (Psa 114:3).

They camp at Gilgal. This place will get its name after the circumcision has taken place there (Jos 5:9). But it has already been mentioned here because

they are on the right ground for carrying out the circumcision: on the territory of the resurrection. The sign of circumcision comes in Joshua 5.

### Verses 20-24 | Twelve Stones Set Up at Gilgal

*20 Those twelve stones which they had taken from the Jordan, Joshua set up at Gilgal. 21 He said to the sons of Israel, "When your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, 'What are these stones?' 22 then you shall inform your children, saying, 'Israel crossed this Jordan on dry ground.' 23 For the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan before you until you had crossed, just as the LORD your God had done to the Red Sea, which He dried up before us until we had crossed; 24 that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the LORD is mighty, so that you may fear the LORD your God forever."*

Twelve men each took a stone from the Jordan to the bank. These stones are set up at Gilgal to form a memorial for the offspring. Twelve other stones have already been set up by Joshua in the middle of the Jordan, also to form a memorial sign. There are twelve stones to represent the whole people of God. The stones in the Jordan are on the place where the ark stood. There, in the Jordan, identification of the people with the ark at the place of the judgment is symbolized.

It is the same for us. The believer is judged in Christ, in His going into death. But the ark has also come out of the Jordan again. The twelve stones on the banks of the Jordan remind the believer that he died and rose with Christ. Both aspects – His death and His resurrection – can be found in the letter to the Colossians. About His death and our identification with it we read: "In Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ" (Col 2:11). About His resurrection and our identification with Him we read: "Having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead" (Col 2:12).

The children will ask us about our life in the land, about enjoying the blessings of heaven. The fathers are told that they will tell their children how the LORD proceeded to give them the land. Future generations must tell it as if they had been there themselves and it affects them personally.

The same it is with the whole work of the Lord Jesus. It happened far before our time, yet we can tell about it as if we have been there. The relationship with the Red Sea is made, because everything we possess in Christ is also the result of doing away with our sins. Therefore, in the letter which deals with our spiritual blessings, there is also mention of the forgiveness of our sins: "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses" (Eph 1:7).

We also see a sequence in explaining the meaning of the sign. First, it is given as an explanation of the sign that it reminds us of the blocking of judgment (verse 7). Here it is a testimony that we have entered the land as a consequence of the death of the Lord Jesus (verses 22-24).

These truths belong in the Christian family. Fathers must be able to explain what the death of the Lord Jesus has to do with living in the land. They should not leave this to teachers in the church or to the brother who do the Bible classes. This story must continue. Children must hear it from their fathers. However, every child must test it against the Scriptures, that is his responsibility.

## Joshua 5

### Introduction

Now that the people have come into the promised land, the first task Joshua is given for them is to circumcise them. Circumcision speaks of the judgment on the flesh (Col 2:11). For us this means that we must apply death to our own flesh, that is to say that we must consider ourselves dead to it (Rom 6:11). In this way the reproach of Egypt – a picture of the world where the flesh finds its food – is rolled away.

The power to overcome is found in the food of the land. After they have celebrated the Passover, they eat of it. This food represents the Lord Jesus. By seeing Him in glory we are changed in His image: “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit” (2Cor 3:18). This gives us strength for struggle.

The Lord Jesus is not only the food, but He is also the Captain in the battle. The respect that Joshua pays to Him fits us (verses 14-15).

In this chapter we see four important events in preparation for the conquest of the country:

1. Circumcision as a picture of judgment on the flesh (verses 2-9).
2. Celebration of the Passover as a picture of salvation by the Lamb of God (verse 10).
3. Feeding on the roasted grain as a picture of feeding on a heavenly Christ (verses 11-12).
4. Joining the “captain of the LORD’s host” as a picture of placing oneself under the authority of Christ (verses 13-15).

### **Verse 1 | The Fear of the Kings**

*1 Now it came about when all the kings of the Amorites who [were] beyond the Jordan to the west, and all the kings of the Canaanites who [were] by the sea, heard how the LORD had dried up the waters of the Jordan before the sons of Israel until they had crossed, that their hearts melted, and there was no spirit in them any longer because of the sons of Israel.*

The peoples of the land are impressed by what has been happening at and with the Jordan. With the people of God, and with people like Rahab, God's power works reverent fear. Among the Gentiles, the power of God is also the cause of fear. This is not a respectful fear, however, but a hateful shudder. It does not process inner conversion and surrender, but resistance. What God has done deprives the peoples of the courage to attack God's people. They withdraw to their fortified cities to resist.

### Verses 2-9 | Circumcision at Gilgal

*2 At that time the LORD said to Joshua, "Make for yourself flint knives and circumcise again the sons of Israel the second time." 3 So Joshua made himself flint knives and circumcised the sons of Israel at Gibeath-haaraloth. 4 This is the reason why Joshua circumcised them: all the people who came out of Egypt who were males, all the men of war, died in the wilderness along the way after they came out of Egypt. 5 For all the people who came out were circumcised, but all the people who were born in the wilderness along the way as they came out of Egypt had not been circumcised. 6 For the sons of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, until all the nation, [that is], the men of war who came out of Egypt, perished because they did not listen to the voice of the LORD, to whom the LORD had sworn that He would not let them see the land which the LORD had sworn to their fathers to give us, a land flowing with milk and honey. 7 Their children whom He raised up in their place, Joshua circumcised; for they were uncircumcised, because they had not circumcised them along the way. 8 Now when they had finished circumcising all the nation, they remained in their places in the camp until they were healed. 9 Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you." So the name of that place is called Gilgal to this day.*

After the announcement that there is no more courage among the enemies (verse 1), this is the ideal opportunity to attack. God determines, however, that this is the opportunity to circumcise the people (verse 2). The command of circumcising the people means that the people become totally incapable of fighting. The people will be so powerless for a few days as a result of the circumcision that they will not be able to defend themselves against a possible attack (cf. Gen 34:24-26). But God never rushes. He knows what He does and arranges everything for the benefit of His people.

The conquest of the land begins with the lesson of Gilgal. In the circumcision they learn that there is no power in themselves. Spiritually applied this means that each of us must learn personally “that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh” (Rom 7:18a). The people must return to Gilgal after every battle to learn that lesson again and again as a starting point for the next battle. The place of action is called “Gibeath-haaraloth”, that means “the Hill of the foreskins”. By this name, this hill will forever be linked to Gilgal as the place where the circumcision took place.

The circumcision must be carried out with “flint knives”. Flint is a material that is not manufactured by human hands. God makes it available. A knife is an instrument with which something is cut away in this case. The flint knife indicates God’s judgment on the sinful nature of man. God used “the knife” when He made Christ to be sin and thus judged sin in the flesh: “For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God [did]: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and [as an offering] for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh” (Rom 8:3; cf. Zec 13:7).

We use the knife when we judge every manifestation of the flesh in us, that is to say, we do not give in to it and ignore it: “Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to [literally: put to death the members which are upon the earth] immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry” (Col 3:5). This means that we immediately judge every impulse of the flesh that wants to incite us to sin and think of what happened to us in the death of Christ, that we died with Him.

Gilgal has five characteristics:

1. There stands the memorial of the twelve stones from the Jordan: the memorial means that there is a constant memory of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus.
2. It is the place of circumcision: death must be applied to our flesh and its works.
3. The Passover is being celebrated there in a totally new way. It is the first Passover in the land: when we remember the death of the Lord Jesus, we may think of all the blessings He has given us on the basis of His work.

4. In Gilgal God gives a completely new food after the circumcision, namely the fruit of the land: we may enjoy what has been given us in blessings.
5. In Gilgal we meet “the captain of the LORD’s hosts”: in the battle we must fight to enjoy the blessings, He goes ahead of us. That’s why victory is certain.

Joshua is ordered to circumcise the people for the second time. The meaning of circumcision is found in the New Testament. The Old Testament does not give the doctrine, but the examples of how we can live our lives of faith and enjoy what we have received in Christ. The teaching of Paul’s letters makes clear what the significance of circumcision is for us. We mainly read about this in the letter to the Romans and in the letter to the Colossians. The letter to the Colossians brings the believer in the spiritual sense from Egypt into Canaan. In that letter we spiritually come to Gilgal.

The key verses can be found in Colossians 2. There we read that in Christ there is all fullness and that the believer has come to fullness in Him: “For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority” (Col 2:9-10). This is the position of every believer from the moment he has come to conversion and faith. At that moment he was ‘circumcised’, that is to say, at the moment of his conversion and faith, the judgment that God exercised on Christ in his place and for his sins, that judgment has been attributed to him.

But after forty years, a new circumcision comes. Joshua is ordered to circumcise the Israelites “the second time”. That teaches us the following. You may know you are in a certain position, but that’s not the same as putting it into practice. Paul says to the Philippians: “We are the circumcision” (Phil 3:3). This shows that for us it is not an external circumcision, but an internal circumcision, a circumcision of the heart.

He says it in the letter to the Romans in this way: “For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God” (Rom 2:28-29). This must be fulfilled by judging every working of the flesh that arises in us (Col 3:5).



The circumcision is carried out to a new people. The whole old generation has perished (verse 6). A whole new generation, that of sons, has entered the land. God calls Israel “My son” (Exo 4:22). It is a new generation of sons with new exercises. They are being circumcised. There is also an application to the future of the people when the whole people receive a new heart within them (Deu 30:6; Eze 36:26-27).

When the people have been circumcised, the reproach of Egypt has been rolled away. The reproach of Egypt has been on them for the whole wilderness journey. Egypt is marked by wisdom. But worldly, human wisdom cannot help us to know how to live. This is the danger to which Colossians are exposed. They are sensitive to the wisdom that opposes Christ. That is a wisdom by which Christ is removed from the hearts. They are warned not to be prey to that false wisdom (Col 2:8a).

Everything that is of the world must be turned away from us. There is talk of ‘rolling away’, as if it were a heavy weight that lies on us and that keeps us subject to the world. Taking away the things from the world can hurt if we cut them away because they have become a part of us. It will take some time before we are recovered. The sooner we radically deal with sin, the shorter the recovery time will have to take.

### Verses 10-11 | The Passover

*10 While the sons of Israel camped at Gilgal they observed the Passover on the evening of the fourteenth day of the month on the desert plains of Jericho. 11 On the day after the Passover, on that very day, they ate some of the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and parched [grain].*

What will certainly soothe the pain is the thought of the Passover lamb, which was the cause of their liberation from Egypt. It speaks of the Lord Jesus and the judgment that came on Him to free us from the power of sin and from the judgment of God. Therefore, after circumcision, the Passover can be celebrated, for how could an uncircumcised people celebrate the Passover? That is impossible. So it is impossible to celebrate the Lord’s Supper without self-judgment (1Cor 11:28).

The Passover is celebrated here for the first time in the land, after the people celebrated it in Egypt (Exo 12:1-14) and in the wilderness (Num 9:1-5).

They do it just before the walls of Jericho. The LORD “prepares a table” for His people “in the presence” of their “enemies” (Psa 23:5a).

Blood is applied only once, in Egypt (Exo 12:7), but the memory of the liberation from the judgment of God is celebrated every year. We can celebrate the Passover every first day of the week in celebrating the Lord’s Supper. Each time we celebrate, we will be impressed by the value of the blood. Without blood there is no salvation, no wilderness journey, and no entry into the land. Both the letter to the Ephesians and the letter to the Colossians, which present the highest Christian blessings to us, speak of blood and the forgiveness of sins (Eph 1:7; Col 1:14). We must never forget the blood of the Lamb. We owe all the blessings to the blood.

After the Passover, the Feast of unleavened bread begins, which lasts seven days (Exo 12:15-20). This speaks of a whole life – the number ‘seven’ speaks of completeness, in this case of a complete period – without malice and wickedness: “Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are [in fact] unleavened. For Christ, our Passover, also has been sacrificed. Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1Cor 5:7-8). If we have celebrated the Lord’s Supper, it will have an effect in the following week. At the same time, that week is a preparation for the next Lord’s Supper.

On the day after the Passover, the people eat from the proceeds of the land. It is also the day on which the first sheaf from the barley harvest is brought. That speaks of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. He is the Firstborn of the dead. In connection therewith the people may eat from the proceeds of the land. Through His resurrection we can enjoy all spiritual blessings. But we will never forget that we owe everything to the judgment that He wanted to undergo for it. We see this in the roasting (Darby translation) of the fruit of the land, i.e. the fruit is exposed to the fire.

The fruit of the land, barley and wheat, symbolically represents the Lord Jesus. He is the bread of life (Jn 6:33). The Passover speaks of His death, but He was raised on the first day of the week, on the day of bringing the first fruits of barley. That is why John 6 also begins with barley loaves (Jn 6:9). To this the Lord Jesus connects His teaching about Himself as the bread of

life. Whoever eats Him (Jn 6:48-58) has eternal life, that is to say, gets Him as his life, for “He is the true God and eternal life” (1Jn 5:20b). Eating Him means appropriating Him in faith in the acknowledgment that life is only given by Him.

The Lord Jesus speaks of Himself as the grain of wheat and the fruit thereof when the grain of wheat dies (Jn 12:24). The wheat comes later than the barley (Exo 9:31-32). The barley speaks of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. The wheat speaks of His death, His resurrection, and the fruit of His death. We are, as it were, seven weeks further. We see a glorified Lord, while we see ourselves in the many fruits, as is also represented in the two wave breads (Lev 23:15-17).

### Verse 12 | The Manna Ceases

*12 The manna ceased on the day after they had eaten some of the produce of the land, so that the sons of Israel no longer had manna, but they ate some of the yield of the land of Canaan during that year.*

Eating the fruit of the land is not the same as eating the manna, the food in the wilderness. The manna represents the Lord Jesus, but in His life on earth. Every day we need the manna for our earthly journey. We eat that manna when we read the Gospels, for example. There we see the life of the Lord Jesus in humiliation on earth. By feeding ourselves with Him in this way we get His features. But for knowing the heavenly blessings we must concern ourselves with Him as Man in heaven. That is proposed in eating the yield of the land. We do this when we read about Him in the letters, especially Paul’s, in connection with the place He now occupies in heaven.

God gives in His providence the manna for as long as it is necessary. He has even given it when the people once show their aversion to it (Num 11:6). The fact that the people have been able to pick up the bread from heaven every morning and feed themselves with it has been a daily recurring miracle. God works miracles as long as it is needed. This also indicates that miracles are temporary. If there are ‘normal’ facilities, the miracles stop. There is no claim to be made on the progress of God’s extraordinary actions.

### Verses 13-15 | The Captain

*13 Now it came about when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing opposite him with his sword drawn in his hand, and Joshua went to him and said to him, "Are you for us or for our adversaries?" 14 He said, "No; rather I indeed come now [as] captain of the host of the LORD." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and bowed down, and said to him, "What has my lord to say to his servant?" 15 The captain of the LORD's host said to Joshua, "Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so.*

It seems that Joshua went to Jericho to measure the resistance. He has not yet been commanded to attack the city. He may have discussed how this extremely strong city should be captured. He is a military man, but he has never moved up against a fortified city. Absorbed in thoughts he lifts up his eyes and to his surprise discovers the Man with the drawn sword. He does not recognize Him, as is later the case with Gideon (Jdg 6:11-22) and Manoah (Jdg 13:11-21), but not with Abraham who does recognize Him (Gen 18:1-3).

Once we have taken in the previous events, we can, after using the flint knife (verse 2), meet the Man with the sword. So we see Him with Balaam. There He is ready to kill him if he should drive on (Num 22:23). Also at Jerusalem He is ready with the sword to destroy the city (1Chr 21:16). Here He goes out ahead of the army. He has come "now" and not a moment earlier. His coming is announced (Exo 23:23) and now He has come and takes over the guidance.

His presence makes every place where He stands a holy place (cf. Gen 28:16-17). This is how He says it to Moses when it comes to a people in misery about to be delivered (Exo 3:5). Here it is about a liberated people that is about to conquer the land.

The presence of the LORD as "the captain of the LORD's hosts" requires as much holiness and reverence as in His coming down to redeem His people. As He is when He comes down to participate in the oppression of His people – He appears in the burning bush which is a picture of it – so He is also when He stands among His people to bless them and lead them in battle. The hosts of the LORD are his earthly people, but it is also the angelic hosts which He commands (Gen 32:1-2; 2Kgs 6:17; Mt 26:53; Heb 1:7,14).

We too need spiritual preparation to be able to fight the spiritual struggle. The spiritual preparation we have in Ephesians 1-5. This also includes that the relationships between man and wife, parents and children, employer and employee mentioned in Ephesians 5, are in order. Then the struggle according to the directions of Ephesians 6 can be fought effectively. The struggle fought in the heavenly battle is a holy struggle.

Joshua's mind is that of submission and obedience. He asks respectfully what the LORD has to say to him. When the LORD does so, Joshua obeys immediately. This is the right attitude to receive further communications about the struggle to be fought.

## Joshua 6

### Introduction

The first city for Israel to conquer is Jericho. Before describing how the people should proceed, we read that God has already given them victory (verse 2). Then they have to march around the city one time every day for six days and seven times on the seventh day. By doing so they discover how superbly strong Jericho is and that they will never be able to conquer it in their own power.

But the ark – the well-known picture of the Lord Jesus – is in their midst. After they have been marching around Jericho for the seventh time on the seventh day, the trumpets are blown and the people shout. Then the walls of Jericho collapse. “By faith the walls of Jericho fell down” (Heb 11:30). That also applies to us.

The Lord Jesus has overcome the world for us: “In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world” (Jn 16:33b). The world is far too strong for us. But through faith we overcome the world: “For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1Jn 5:4-5).

### **Verse 1 | Jericho Is Tightly Shut**

*1 Now Jericho was tightly shut because of the sons of Israel; no one went out and no one came in.*

Jericho is an impressive fortress, seemingly impregnable. The city is hermetically closed to the Israelites. Jericho is a picture of the world as the system used by Satan to prevent us from taking possession of the land with the result that we will go our way as earthly minded Christians. Jericho means ‘fragrant’. It is a city where it is pleasant to stay. She is attractive because of her palms. But Jericho is near the wilderness and the Dead Sea. The attractiveness is deceptive.

What is my Jericho? That could be my position, or my wife or husband, parents, career, hobby. It can be the human institutions that regulate the faith community in a human way. These may all be things that prevent us from taking possession of our heavenly blessings. This Jericho must be overcome.

## Verse 2 | The LORD Ensures the Victory

*2 The LORD said to Joshua, "See, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king [and] the valiant warriors.*

This verse stands in the so-called prophetic perfect tense. The promise is certain. God doesn't say 'I'll do it', but 'I've done it, the city is all in your power, as sure as if it already is in your possession'. Rahab believed this (Jos 2:8-9). God's certain promises always form the starting point for an act of obedience. Promises are a great encouragement to go in confidence on Him the way He proposes us, no matter how foolish that way may be in the eyes of the world. On that road, the Lord's presence will be proclaimed loudly, as it is represented by the trumpets.

The people only have to believe and obey. First obedience, then strength, that is the order of God.

## Verses 3-5 | God's Strategy

*3 You shall march around the city, all the men of war circling the city once. You shall do so for six days. 4 Also seven priests shall carry seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark; then on the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets. 5 It shall be that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when you hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city will fall down flat, and the people will go up every man straight ahead."*

The land of peace is first a land of battle. The people are prepared for this battle in the previous chapter. Now they have to fight, but in God's way. No swords are drawn in this chapter. Here we learn: "For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses" (2Cor 10:4).

Before the battle begins, God first wants to teach His people clearly that fortresses like Jericho can only be brought down by His power. His people can do nothing to let the walls fall down. That does not mean, however, that the people should just stay at home. The fact that they marched around the wall by order of the LORD did not contribute to the fall either. They were impressed by the strength of the wall. Humanly speaking, that is to be discouraged by it.

Why do they have to march around the city for seven days? The goal is that the people will learn both their own inability and the power of God. They should not look at the wall, but at the ark. That is where the strength lies. We must learn to trust this power, that is to believe. The wall has fallen by the power of God and the power of faith, for “by faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days” (Heb 11:30).

The walls do not fall immediately after they have marched around them for the first time. Perseverance is needed. And this perseverance must have a perfect work (Jam 1:4; cf. 1Kgs 18:43-44a). This also applies to the problems in our lives that are insurmountable for us.

Then the people are told to shout before the walls have fallen down. This shows us that we will already thank you for the victory that is given, even before the victory has taken place. After they have shouted, the walls fall down.

The trumpets are “of rams’ horns”, i.e. trumpets of the horns of rams. The ram’s horn announces the year of jubilee. The year of jubilee is the fiftieth year in which slaves are released and territories regain their original ownership (Lev 25:8-13). By using this horn in the conquest of Jericho we see that this conquest is not so much a military matter, but more a religious one. This is also evident from the priests who play a more important role here than soldiers.

We need soldiers, but first it comes down to priests. This is also evident in the silver trumpets: “The priestly sons of Aaron, moreover, shall blow the trumpets; and this shall be for you a perpetual statute throughout your generations. When you go to war in your land against the adversary who attacks you, then you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets, that you may be remembered before the LORD your God, and be saved from your



enemies” (Num 10:8-9; cf. 2Chr 13:12a). Priests are in the presence of God with their sacrifices. Coming from the presence of God, they represent a royal priesthood to the world around them. They give spiritual guidance to the people.

A clear sound must be given on the trumpet, otherwise the hearers will not know what to do. “For if the bugle [literally: trumpet] produces an indistinct sound, who will prepare himself for battle?” (1Cor 14:8). Those who have a word for the church as prophets from God’s presence must be priests. They are able to lead the people of God in the struggle even in difficult circumstances. The Word of God makes clear what our ‘Jericho’ is and how we have to struggle and what gives us faith and makes us shout when there is nothing to shout for unbelief.

### Verses 6-7 | Instructions of Joshua

*6 So Joshua the son of Nun called the priests and said to them, “Take up the ark of the covenant, and let seven priests carry seven trumpets of rams’ horns before the ark of the LORD.” 7 Then he said to the people, “Go forward, and march around the city, and let the armed men go on before the ark of the LORD.”*

Joshua – here he is a type of the power and insight of the Holy Spirit in the believer – is assured of success and therefore acts without hesitation. There is no human explanation for the fall of Jericho. It can only be attributed to the power of God who through faith works for His people.

### Verses 8-11 | The First Day Around Jericho

*8 And it was [so], that when Joshua had spoken to the people, the seven priests carrying the seven trumpets of rams’ horns before the LORD went forward and blew the trumpets; and the ark of the covenant of the LORD followed them. 9 The armed men went before the priests who blew the trumpets, and the rear guard came after the ark, while they continued to blow the trumpets. 10 But Joshua commanded the people, saying, “You shall not shout nor let your voice be heard nor let a word proceed out of your mouth, until the day I tell you, ‘Shout!’ Then you shall shout!” 11 So he had the ark of the LORD taken around the city, circling [it] once; then they came into the camp and spent the night in the camp.*

While going only the trumpets ‘speak’. This is the speaking of the priests to God and to the people. The people themselves may not say a word and must remain silent (cf. Exo 14:14). There is no own contribution to this fight. Each own contribution is a proof of unbelief and a denial of the fact that God has given the only right strategy with the certain result of victory. This is also Peter’s fault when he rebukes the Lord Jesus after He has spoken of His suffering and rejection as the way of God (Mt 16:21-23).

All the actions of the first day are represented in this one word: “So he had the ark of the LORD taken around the city, circling [it] once” (verse 11a). It is not about the people, but about the ark. All the strength of the people can only be found with the ark. Without the ark, as a picture of the Lord Jesus, the people are totally powerless and everything would end in a drama for the people.

The right base camp for the people is Gilgal, to which they return to spend the night. They return to that place every day. There the circumcision took place. Returning to that place every time means that after every time they set out, they must always become aware that the victory is not the result of any strength in themselves. It means in our life of faith that we always realize that in us, that is in our flesh, there is no power, but that all power comes only from the Lord Jesus.

### **Verses 12-14 | The Second to the Sixth Day Around Jericho**

*12 Now Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of the LORD. 13 The seven priests carrying the seven trumpets of rams’ horns before the ark of the LORD went on continually, and blew the trumpets; and the armed men went before them and the rear guard came after the ark of the LORD, while they continued to blow the trumpets. 14 Thus the second day they marched around the city once and returned to the camp; they did so for six days.*

God could have made the walls fall down after the first day. But a second day of marching around the city is emphasized. And as they did the first two days, they do until the sixth day. All this time, it seems that no progress has been made. Everything stays as it was. We can imagine that there must have been many consultations in the hearts of the people and inhabitants of Jericho.

## Verses 15-25 | The Fall of Jericho

15 Then on the seventh day they rose early at the dawning of the day and marched around the city in the same manner seven times; only on that day they marched around the city seven times. 16 At the seventh time, when the priests blew the trumpets, Joshua said to the people, "Shout! For the LORD has given you the city. 17 The city shall be under the ban, it and all that is in it belongs to the LORD; only Rahab the harlot and all who are with her in the house shall live, because she hid the messengers whom we sent. 18 But as for you, only keep yourselves from the things under the ban, so that you do not covet [them] and take some of the things under the ban, and make the camp of Israel accursed and bring trouble on it. 19 But all the silver and gold and articles of bronze and iron are holy to the LORD; they shall go into the treasury of the LORD." 20 So the people shouted, and [priests] blew the trumpets; and when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, the people shouted with a great shout and the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight ahead, and they took the city. 21 They utterly destroyed everything in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox and sheep and donkey, with the edge of the sword. 22 Joshua said to the two men who had spied out the land, "Go into the harlot's house and bring the woman and all she has out of there, as you have sworn to her." 23 So the young men who were spies went in and brought out Rahab and her father and her mother and her brothers and all she had; they also brought out all her relatives and placed them outside the camp of Israel. 24 They burned the city with fire, and all that was in it. Only the silver and gold, and articles of bronze and iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the LORD. 25 However, Rahab the harlot and her father's household and all she had, Joshua spared; and she has lived in the midst of Israel to this day, for she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.

When they have marched around the city seven times on the last day, Joshua first gives a number of orders with a view to the taking of Jericho. He does so in all peace. Maybe the inhabitants of Jericho can hear what he says. He speaks the language of faith, of the certainty of the coming victory, of faith in the action of God.

There are no negotiations with the city about surrender. The verdict is determined. The time to be saved is over. To be under the ban means for

people death; for things it means separation to God. The metals silver, gold, bronze and iron are sanctified to the LORD. Thus we must learn that everything is for God, including everything we overcome in faith.

If God separates the things of the world to Himself, He can, if He wants, use them for Himself. But if man, the Christian, connects himself to this, the Lord must judge him. God does not want there to be any fellowship with something that forms the power of God's enemy: the world and its power.

The silver and gold and the bronze and iron objects are not destroyed. Gold remains gold and silver remains silver although they were found in Jericho. It is wrongly used in Jericho but it is not wrong in itself. The tabernacle was built with the gold and silver from Egypt. So is all that is in Jericho holy to the LORD (verse 19).

People can do a lot of good with electricity, but also a lot of what is evil. So it is with the thinking given to us by God. What do we think of? What does man devise? Is it with and for God or without Him? Our thinking must be subjected to God, and if the Spirit can use it, what results of it will be to God's glory. The world always uses everything completely wrong, namely only for itself, without any thought of God.

The walls fall down flat when to the sound of the shout is heard. The invisible power of God becomes visible in the collapse of the wall. A number of physical explanations have been put forward that could have caused the fall of the wall. A naturalistic cause does not have to undo the miracle, because it remains a miracle that the part on which the house of Rahab stands, is spared. But it may also be possible that the "captain of the LORD's hosts" (Jos 5:14) has sent out His invisible angelic hosts to demolish the city wall in an instant. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?" (Heb 1:14). These are all mere suggestions, for no explanation is given to us in Scripture.

The part of the wall on which Rahab's house stands is spared. Rahab does not perish with the unbelievers because she has believed (Heb 11:31). All people in Jericho are killed because they did not in faith join Rahab. Rahab's house is the only safe place to escape the city's judgment (cf. Heb

11:7). Anyone who wanted to be saved had to believe the testimony of Rahab.

There is no injustice with God. Each of the people of Jericho, just like Rahab, had the opportunity to believe. God has had patience for four hundred years (Gen 15:13). So He is not merciless when He brings judgment. He gives plenty of time and many opportunities to seize the salvation He offers.

After Rahab and her family are saved, they first come to a place outside the people. Cleansing must take place out first. Then they are accepted into the people. Rahab even gets a place of honor there because she is included in the genealogy of the Lord Jesus (Mt 1:5). She is part of a people with whom she will now take the land. With joy she has taken her place among God's people.

### Verse 26 | Joshua Curses Who Builds Jericho

*26 Then Joshua made them take an oath at that time, saying, "Cursed before the LORD is the man who rises up and builds this city Jericho; with [the loss of] his firstborn he shall lay its foundation, and with [the loss of] his youngest son he shall set up its gates."*

It takes a lot of effort and faith to break down 'our Jericho'. We are easily inclined to rebuild this Jericho. How easily are human institutions rebuilt. We are always in danger of rebuilding what we have broken down in youthful zeal. But the price is high. Joshua has predicted how high the price is. He speaks like a prophet. His words have been fulfilled (1Kgs 16:34).

Our return to, or the re-admission of, the things of the world can become a means for our children to die spiritually. From a spiritual point of view, we will lose our descendants when we start living for the world or also for the earth. It is of no benefit to God. On the contrary, there will be a great loss, both in terms of our own life and that of our descendants.

The Spirit speaks to our hearts through this. Do we remember what we broke down in our youth? Shall we give that another chance to come to life?

**Verse 27 | The LORD Is With Joshua**

| *27 So the LORD was with Joshua, and his fame was in all the land.*

Joshua's success does not lie in his brilliant military leadership, but because the LORD is with him. So it is also written of Joseph that the LORD is with him (Gen 39:2,21; Acts 7:10; cf. Acts 10:38). The LORD supports the whole performance of Joshua as long as he is in His way. Nothing can raise a person's fame, or give him more real prestige, than the unmistakable proof that God is with him.

The next chapter shows what happens when you rely on your own strength. The good start is no guarantee for good progress. A victory over Jericho is no guarantee that we will not stumble at Ai.

## Joshua 7

### Introduction

In this chapter we see the consequences of sin in the people of God. There is one man in Israel who has sinned, but God says that the whole people have been unfaithful and have transgressed (verses 1,11). If sin is present in His people, God cannot go on with them. Israel discovers that to its loss. Ai is so small in their eyes, that according to them the whole people do not have to go up against it. Their previous victory over Jericho and the sin committed in their midst make them self-confident and independent of God.

By their defeat Joshua goes to the LORD to ask Him for the cause of it. The answer is that it comes from sin in their midst and that it must first be removed. Even in this day and age we can only count on the presence of the Lord Jesus in the church if we respond to the instruction: "Remove the wicked man from among yourselves" (1Cor 5:13b).

The difference between Joshua 6 and Joshua 7 is that in Joshua 6 we see the power of God and in Joshua 7 we see the weakness of man, also of the believer. The weakness of the people is expressed in two ways: Achan takes from what is under the ban and Joshua under-estimates the enemy.

The walls of Jericho did not fall by the power of man, but by faith in the power of God. They had to experience for a week that a victory does not depend on them, but on God. This has been an encouraging start. But the impression that the people gained there was short-lived.

It is with it as with us. We can have a beautiful religious experience one day and fail the next. The presence of Him Who gives the victory also asks for holiness.

### **Verse 1 | The Sin of Achan**

*1 But the sons of Israel acted unfaithfully in regard to the things under the ban, for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, from the tribe of Judah, took some of the things under the ban, therefore the anger of the LORD burned against the sons of Israel.*

The people are only just in the land and sin reveals itself. This is how it happened in the church when it has only just come into being: Ananias and Sapphira cheated the church and lied against the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:1-3). This is how it has always gone with everything that God has given to man for good and in grace. When something is entrusted to the responsibility of man, he has corrupted it after a short time. We see this, for example, in paradise and at the institution of the priesthood.

Achan violates the commandment (Jos 6:18) and does not think about the consequences for his family and for the people. When sin is committed, others are often dragged into its consequences. You do not go away from the way of God only by yourself. Often the condition of the believer is also a reflection of the family from which he originates. He is formed by it. Maybe that is why the whole family of Achan is mentioned.

We can also remember that in Achan the whole people commit this act of unfaithfulness. Anger burns against the whole people. The principle is that what one of us does is not without consequences for others. The mass must pay if such evil is present among the people. It defiles the whole people.

This evil appears when the whole people are weak. These things are connected. Where there is weakness, evil gets a chance, and when there is evil, the power is gone. The previous day's trust in God is no guarantee of trust for today. Achan can do this because the whole people are weak. When evil manifests itself, we must ask ourselves how it has been possible, wherein we have failed.

### **Verses 2-5 | The Defeat at Ai**

*2 Now Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is near Beth-aven, east of Bethel, and said to them, "Go up and spy out the land." So the men went up and spied out Ai. 3 They returned to Joshua and said to him, "Do not let all the people go up; [only] about two or three thousand men need go up to Ai; do not make all the people toil up there, for they are few." 4 So about three thousand men from the people went up there, but they fled from the men of Ai. 5 The men of Ai struck down about thirty-six of their men, and pursued them from the gate as far as Shebarim and struck them down on the descent, so the hearts of the people melted and became as water.*



Joshua gives a command without consulting the LORD. He also sends men out from Jericho and not from Gilgal. Is this already an indication of the cause of sin? The sinful flesh comes to light, also in Joshua. Here we read what happens to the people when they are not led by the LORD. The lesson for us is that we often pretend not to need prayer when, in our eyes, there are small problems. But then we forget that behind small problems hide enormous powers. The humiliation does not fail.

Ai means ‘mess’. It is at Beth-aven that means ‘house of evil’. After the spying out of Ai a conclusion of the human mind follows. Did they not learn from Jericho that everything depends on God? Has the enemy now become so weak that they can handle it themselves and need little effort to do so? No one is killed in Jericho, but in this small city a great defeat is suffered. They lose the battle against Ai which also costs the lives of about thirty-six of their men.

In the number thirty-six we can recognize the government of God. Thirty-six is three times twelve. Three is the number of the triune God and twelve is the number of government. We can apply this to the abuses in the church in Corinth of which Paul, in view of the reign of God, says: “For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep” (1Cor 11:30). Nor are they necessarily the most to blame. It is about learning from our failure, a failure that sometimes kills others.

Now the hearts of the people of God and not of the enemies melt (cf. Jos 2:9,11; 5:1). Fear melts the heart if we do not go our way with the Lord.

### Verses 6-9 | Joshua Calls to the LORD

*6 Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the LORD until the evening, [both] he and the elders of Israel; and they put dust on their heads. 7 Joshua said, “Alas, O Lord GOD, why did You ever bring this people over the Jordan, [only] to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? If only we had been willing to dwell beyond the Jordan! 8 O Lord, what can I say since Israel has turned [their] back before their enemies? 9 For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear of it, and they will surround us and cut off our name from the earth. And what will You do for Your great name?”*

In the conquest of Jericho the ark took the central place. When attacking Ai we hear nothing of the ark. After the defeat Joshua seeks the ark to humiliate himself before the LORD. He lies before the LORD in humility and prays till the evening, if the LORD will make it clear what is going on.

Yet his prayer also shows some reproach, as if God is responsible for the defeat. This does not come from faith. As if God does not have the best for His people, but wants to kill them. In the same way, we can also react to difficulties that affect us, which is due to going our own way.

Joshua also speaks of the name of Israel as an important name, although he also points to the “great name” of God (verse 9). What happens by our name is our own fault, but it is only truly embarrassing when the Name of God is also insulted by our behavior. The enemies may think that God is not strong enough to help His people.

### **Verses 10-15 | The Answer of the LORD**

*10 So the LORD said to Joshua, “Rise up! Why is it that you have fallen on your face? 11 Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them. And they have even taken some of the things under the ban and have both stolen and deceived. Moreover, they have also put [them] among their own things. 12 Therefore the sons of Israel cannot stand before their enemies; they turn [their] backs before their enemies, for they have become accursed. I will not be with you anymore unless you destroy the things under the ban from your midst. 13 Rise up! Consecrate the people and say, ‘Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow, for thus the LORD, the God of Israel, has said, “There are things under the ban in your midst, O Israel. You cannot stand before your enemies until you have removed the things under the ban from your midst.” 14 In the morning then you shall come near by your tribes. And it shall be that the tribe which the LORD takes [by lot] shall come near by families, and the family which the LORD takes shall come near by households, and the household which the LORD takes shall come near man by man. 15 It shall be that the one who is taken with the things under the ban shall be burned with fire, he and all that belongs to him, because he has transgressed the covenant of the LORD, and because he has committed a disgraceful thing in Israel.”*

Joshua receives an answer while he is still speaking (cf. Isa 65:24; Dan 9:20). God tells him to rise up. The matter has become clear, as has Joshua's mindset. Now is the time to act. God is going to reveal evil. The people have sinned and must get rid of evil from their midst.

Sin is never just a matter for the person alone. If sin is not judged, it defiles the whole. We are not only dealing with ourselves. The Lord's Table is precisely the expression of unity. Therefore, the evil must be removed (1Cor 5:13b), otherwise the Lord can no longer be in the midst of His people. If they let the ban exist in their midst, God can no longer be in their midst (verse 12).

Sin is present and therefore the power of God is no longer found with them. God cannot make Himself one with sin. God does not say that they will remain weak, but that Israel will not be able to stand before their enemies. This is a sad change, for God has said before: "No man will [be able] to stand before you" (Jos 1:5). Removing sin means standing on God's side in relation to evil. When that happens, the relationship between God and the whole is restored to its normal state.

### Verses 16-18 | Achan Is Appointed

*16 So Joshua arose early in the morning and brought Israel near by tribes, and the tribe of Judah was taken. 17 He brought the family of Judah near, and he took the family of the Zerahites; and he brought the family of the Zerahites near man by man, and Zabdi was taken. 18 He brought his household near man by man; and Achan, son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, from the tribe of Judah, was taken.*

Again Joshua, as we regularly read of him, arises early (verse 16; Jos 3:1; 6:12; 8:10). There should not be any waiting with this case. What happened in Israel can also happen in our conscience. If God makes something clear to our conscience as sin, it will paralyze us if we do not condemn it immediately.

To reveal evil, God goes a certain way. By the way He does so, each member of the whole people is personally placed before God. We see this in "man by man" (verse 17). We also see it with the disciples, after the Lord has said that one of them will betray Him. They then ask, each one of them

personally: “Surely not I, Lord?” (Mt 26:21-22). When there is evil in the church I have to ask: ‘What is the situation with me? Is there also evil in our house?’

To make sin public Joshua follows exactly the directions the LORD has given (verse 14). Achan cannot escape his discovery. From the beginning he had the opportunity to come up with his evil instead of waiting for the moment he had to confess it. Now there is no longer a question of any voluntary action. He is forced to do so. Therefore the confession of Achan has not much value.

While each time the lot is cast, Achan follows its course. He sees how his indication as the guilty one is coming ever closer. Yet he waits till the lot points him out personally. Sin hardens and blinds us to the infallible course of God’s righteousness. Sin will always think that there is a way out to prevent sin from being made public. Sin does not take God into account and even believes that God does not see sin (Psa 94:7).

Achan belongs to the royal tribe of Judah. The fact that this sin has happened among them will save them from boasting of their importance. Scandals in families that are held in esteem must work a humble mind.

### **Verses 19-23 | Achan Acknowledges His Sin**

*19 Then Joshua said to Achan, “My son, I implore you, give glory to the LORD, the God of Israel, and give praise to Him; and tell me now what you have done. Do not hide it from me.” 20 So Achan answered Joshua and said, “Truly, I have sinned against the LORD, the God of Israel, and this is what I did: 21 when I saw among the spoil a beautiful mantle from Shinar and two hundred shekels of silver and a bar of gold fifty shekels in weight, then I coveted them and took them; and behold, they are concealed in the earth inside my tent with the silver underneath it.” 22 So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent; and behold, it was concealed in his tent with the silver underneath it. 23 They took them from inside the tent and brought them to Joshua and to all the sons of Israel, and they poured them out before the LORD.*

If the lot has appointed Achan, Joshua doesn’t ask if Achan did it. It is clear, for God has spoken. But Joshua doesn’t start cursing him, nor does he address him with ‘thief’. It is not appropriate to approach in this way a

member of God's people who is deluded by sin and even hardened. Such an approach reveals a total lack of self-knowledge. Indignation over sin must not lead to a loss of self-control.

By addressing Achan as "my son" Joshua lets hear the connection in which he sees himself to Achan. He doesn't feel better than Achan. Yet sin must be acknowledged and judged. If Joshua urges Achan to give God the honor, it is more a command than a request. God is honored when the whole truth is confessed. Every human being will be forced to do this (Phil 2:10-11).

In the confession of Achan we see the way on which one comes to sin. It is the old history: seeing, coveting and taking (Gen 3:6; 1Jn 2:16; Jam 1:14-15).

The LORD only says that there is stolen (verse 11), but He does not say what has been stolen. He wants the transgressor to do this. Achan mentions the stolen goods by their name (verse 21). God does not want a general confession, but He wants us to mention sin by its name. In this way someone is forced to give back to God what he has stolen from Him (Job 20:15).

What belongs to the LORD, Achan has stolen for himself. Just as it was in wrong hands with Jericho, so it is in wrong hands with Achan. Just like the world, the people of God can also use the things that belong to the LORD for themselves. The Lord gives gifts, abilities. He wants us to use them for Him, to add them to the treasure of the LORD (Jos 6:19). The sin of Achan can also be found with us. Then we adorn ourselves with what belongs to the Lord, we draw attention to ourselves, seek our own honor, we want to please people and not the Lord.

The first thing Achan names, is "a beautiful mantle from Shinar". His words seem to reveal that even now he still regrets having to return this mantle. Although he does not apologize, there is no evidence anywhere that he regrets his act. This kind of people worries more about the fact that they have been discovered than that they see what they have done. They also have no eye for the harmful consequences that their actions have for others.

Pride and haughtiness are connected with Shinar or Babel. We can see that from the city and the tower that was built there (Gen 11:4,9). In Babel also lies the origin of idolatry: she is "THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH" (Rev 17:5). The term "abominations" refers to idols. The "mantle from Shinar" speaks of a religion that

is practiced only for the satisfaction of the flesh. It has a beautiful appearance, but there is no life out of and for God present. We cloth ourselves with a “mantle from Shinar” if we give our religion a beautiful shape that is attractive to people of the world.

The second thing Achan names, is silver. The atonement money is half a shekel of silver (Exo 30:15; 38:25). Silver refers to the price paid for redemption. In the hands of Achan this means that there is a profession of being saved, while there has been no repentance of sins and no conversion to God. It applies to Christians who presumptuously claim to have been saved by virtue of fulfilling certain institutions, such as baptism and Supper, or by belonging to a certain denomination.

The third thing Achan names is a bar of gold or ‘a golden tongue’. Gold represents the glory of God. To ‘a golden tongue’ the thought of speaking about the things of God without the heart having a part in them is connected. Liberal theologians have ‘a golden tongue’, but “with their tongues they keep deceiving,” “the poison of asps is under their lips” (Rom 3:13). It sounds pleasant and biblical to speak of a God of love, but if one does not speak of God as being light, one speaks with a ‘golden tongue’.

Achan has “concealed” these things “in the earth”. This speaks of a use of things for oneself, in connection with life on earth, without seeking the rights of the Lord. He resembles the unfaithful slave, about whom the Lord Jesus speaks in a parable (Mt 25:18). Achan also suffers the fate of that slave, whom the Lord calls “wicked, lazy slave” and also “worthless slave” (Mt 25:26,30).

### **Verses 24-26 | Achan Judged**

*24 Then Joshua and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, the silver, the mantle, the bar of gold, his sons, his daughters, his oxen, his donkeys, his sheep, his tent and all that belonged to him; and they brought them up to the valley of Achor. 25 Joshua said, “Why have you troubled us? The LORD will trouble you this day.” And all Israel stoned them with stones; and they burned them with fire after they had stoned them with stones. 26 They raised over him a great heap of stones that stands to this day, and the LORD turned from the fierceness of His anger. Therefore the name of that place has been called the valley of Achor to this day.*

All of Israel is defiled and must now purify itself. That can only happen when all exercise judgment. In the same way, the removal of the evil from the midst of the church is a matter for the whole church (2Cor 2:6; 7:11b). All are responsible for it; each must act accordingly after personal exercise before God and ask Him how to do things as to their own mind and their own life.

It is good to keep in mind the difference between discipline in Israel and Christian discipline. Christian discipline always has the recovery of the soul in mind. Even if the evil person is to be delivered to satan by Paul, it is “for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (1Cor 5:5). This is a powerful reason to exercise discipline according to the measure of our spiritual strength because we cannot go beyond that. We always have to humble ourselves before God, before and so that evil is removed.

Achan has the stolen stuff concealed in his tent. Because all his family members have to die with him, they will have known about it and therefore become co-responsible. Everything that is connected with Achan is judged. The execution of judgment takes place in the valley of Achor, which is named after this event. Achor means ‘misery’. This is what Achan brought among the people. Achan means ‘he who brings confusion, restlessness’. He was “the troubler of Israel” and brought misery upon the people (1Chr 2:7).

But in Hosea the LORD speaks about how He will give “the valley of Achor as a door of hope” where the people will sing “as in the days of her youth, as in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt” (Hos 2:15). Where judgment has been exercised, the door is opened to a hopeful future. In the future God will spiritually bring His people back to that valley. The people will judge themselves, acknowledge their sins and be accepted again by God as His people. Hope is always present where people are aware of their misery and take refuge in the Lord Jesus.

We must fear sin, but let us never fear the bitterness of its discovery, nor the discipline, for from that moment on, God wants to make His blessing flow to us again. If there is faithfulness and obedience, God will never fail to reveal and take away what prevents the blessing of His people.

## Joshua 8

### Introduction

After the evil has been removed from Israel, the people get a new opportunity to conquer Ai. God prescribes exactly how they should proceed. Only if they listen to Him they will overcome. An ambush must be laid. The enemy does not count on that. From this ambush the city is taken.

So also now every believer has a source of power that is invisible to the world. This source of power is the Holy Spirit. The world does not see Him or know Him, as the Lord Jesus says: "The Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, [but] you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you" (Jn 14:17).

When victory is achieved, Joshua builds an altar. The offerings that are brought thereon speak of the Lord Jesus (Heb 10:5-10). Every victory we achieve is only due to what the Lord Jesus did on the cross.

The reading of the law at the end of this chapter indicates that obedience to the Word of God is the only guarantee for every victory and every altar.

Joshua 7-8 teach us an important spiritual lesson: the judgment of ourselves precedes the judgment of our enemies. "The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph 6:17b) must first do its sanctifying work in our lives before we can apply it to the lives of others.

Joshua 8 teaches us the return of Israel to the power of God. For their restoration they have to perform a lot of actions. All this would not have been necessary if they had acted in simplicity and sincerity of faith. But God uses these things to teach us who we are and Who He is. Pride and false confidence receive a serious lesson here. It takes more effort to return in the way of blessing than it would have cost to avoid evil.

From Joshua 10:28 and onward the cities are conquered in mass. The conquests of Jericho (Joshua 6), Ai (Joshua 8) and Gibeon (Joshua 10) give the necessary principles of conquest that apply to all cities that they have to conquer afterward. We must see what these cities represent in our lives and how we can overcome them. If we gain a victory in the power of God,



then there is a danger that we will trust in our own strength. Ai teaches us how weak we are. In the picture of the chain that is as strong as the weakest link, we are as strong as the weakest Christian among us (Achan). Gibeon (Joshua 9) teaches us that the enemy is cunning.

### Verses 1-2 | Command to Go Up Against Ai

*1 Now the LORD said to Joshua, "Do not fear or be dismayed. Take all the people of war with you and arise, go up to Ai; see, I have given into your hand the king of Ai, his people, his city, and his land. 2 You shall do to Ai and its king just as you did to Jericho and its king; you shall take only its spoil and its cattle as plunder for yourselves. Set an ambush for the city behind it."*

The people get a new chance to take Ai. But they must learn to listen to God. Now a complicated tactic is needed and ten times as many men as they thought they needed first (Jos 7:3). One of the lessons they must learn (and so do we!) is that sins can be forgiven, but that the consequences of sins must be borne.

### Verses 3-9 | Going to Ambush

*3 So Joshua rose with all the people of war to go up to Ai; and Joshua chose 30,000 men, valiant warriors, and sent them out at night. 4 He commanded them, saying, "See, you are going to ambush the city from behind it. Do not go very far from the city, but all of you be ready. 5 Then I and all the people who are with me will approach the city. And when they come out to meet us as at the first, we will flee before them. 6 They will come out after us until we have drawn them away from the city, for they will say, '[They] are fleeing before us as at the first.' So we will flee before them. 7 And you shall rise from [your] ambush and take possession of the city, for the LORD your God will deliver it into your hand. 8 Then it will be when you have seized the city, that you shall set the city on fire. You shall do [it] according to the word of the LORD. See, I have commanded you." 9 So Joshua sent them away, and they went to the place of ambush and remained between Bethel and Ai, on the west side of Ai; but Joshua spent that night among the people.*

They have to take the whole army to capture this small town. That is a deep humiliation. Half of the people also have to flee. This time it has to

because it fits into God's plan, but at the same time it is a shameful performance. They must learn never to underestimate the enemy. Every step is pre-written by the LORD (verse 8).

Here we find in the different actions the different attitudes that the people of God must adopt toward the enemy. In the New Testament we find its spiritual counterparts:

1. Stand against the enemy to resist him (verse 11; Eph 6:13).
2. Watch the enemy from an ambush (verse 12; 1Cor 16:13).
3. Show themselves to the enemy, that he may reveal himself (verse 14; Eph 5:11).
4. Flee before the enemy (verse 15; 2Tim 2:22a).
5. Destroy the enemy (verse 26; Col 3:5).

### Verses 10-17 | Ai Walks Into the Ambush

*10 Now Joshua rose early in the morning and mustered the people, and he went up with the elders of Israel before the people to Ai. 11 Then all the people of war who [were] with him went up and drew near and arrived in front of the city, and camped on the north side of Ai. Now [there was] a valley between him and Ai. 12 And he took about 5,000 men and set them in ambush between Bethel and Ai, on the west side of the city. 13 So they stationed the people, all the army that was on the north side of the city, and its rear guard on the west side of the city, and Joshua spent that night in the midst of the valley. 14 It came about when the king of Ai saw [it], that the men of the city hurried and rose up early and went out to meet Israel in battle, he and all his people at the appointed place before the desert plain. But he did not know that [there was] an ambush against him behind the city. 15 Joshua and all Israel pretended to be beaten before them, and fled by the way of the wilderness. 16 And all the people who were in the city were called together to pursue them, and they pursued Joshua and were drawn away from the city. 17 So not a man was left in Ai or Bethel who had not gone out after Israel, and they left the city unguarded and pursued Israel.*

Again Joshua gets up early and goes with the people of war to Ai. He lets himself be defeated with the people and flees with them. These shameful

experiences are made up for by the fact that God is on their side. The power of God is with them and everything succeeds.

Yet the revelation of this power is not as at Jericho. At Ai there is a lot of human input, a lot happens. That will appeal to all who love action. In comparison to this, marching around Jericho is a boring display. But at Jericho, the power of God is revealed in the exercise of faith and all honor goes to God. The way Ai is conquered doesn't show the strength of the faith but the weakness of the human being.

We can apply this to our victories of faith. Our greatest victories are won in our inner room, on our knees, without any noteworthy characteristics. We can also apply it to the many forms of meetings offered by Christianity. There are places where there are impressive, often so-called, manifestations of the Spirit. In contrast, we read of the church in Philadelphia: "You have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name" (Rev 3:8b). The question is what we choose.

To conquer the city, a lot of actions have to be done. Joshua and the part of the people who are with him are approaching the city from the north (verse 11). This happens at night, while the Jordan has been crossed during the day and everything related to Jericho has taken place during the day. Then a part of the people west of Ai are ambushed (verse 13). When the king of Ai has observed them, they pretend to flee (verses 14-16). All this is necessary to judge all self-confidence.

### Verses 18-29 | Ai Captured and Burned

*18 Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Stretch out the javelin that is in your hand toward Ai, for I will give it into your hand." So Joshua stretched out the javelin that was in his hand toward the city. 19 The [men in] ambush rose quickly from their place, and when he had stretched out his hand, they ran and entered the city and captured it, and they quickly set the city on fire. 20 When the men of Ai turned back and looked, behold, the smoke of the city ascended to the sky, and they had no place to flee this way or that, for the people who had been fleeing to the wilderness turned against the pursuers. 21 When Joshua and all Israel saw that the [men in] ambush had captured the city and that the smoke of the city ascended, they turned back and slew the men of Ai. 22 The others came*

*out from the city to encounter them, so that they were [trapped] in the midst of Israel, some on this side and some on that side; and they slew them until no one was left of those who survived or escaped. 23 But they took alive the king of Ai and brought him to Joshua. 24 Now when Israel had finished killing all the inhabitants of Ai in the field in the wilderness where they pursued them, and all of them were fallen by the edge of the sword until they were destroyed, then all Israel returned to Ai and struck it with the edge of the sword. 25 All who fell that day, both men and women, were 12,000—all the people of Ai. 26 For Joshua did not withdraw his hand with which he stretched out the javelin until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai. 27 Israel took only the cattle and the spoil of that city as plunder for themselves, according to the word of the LORD which He had commanded Joshua. 28 So Joshua burned Ai and made it a heap forever, a desolation until this day. 29 He hanged the king of Ai on a tree until evening; and at sunset Joshua gave command and they took his body down from the tree and threw it at the entrance of the city gate, and raised over it a great heap of stones [that stands] to this day.*

When the city is empty, God shows that He is in charge. He tells Joshua what to do. How important it is always to listen to the voice of the Lord. Joshua has to stretch out his javelin. That is not a sign for the ambush to get out, at least we don't read that. He keeps the javelin stretched out until the full victory is achieved. It recalls the raised hands of Moses, when he is on the mountain, while Joshua is fighting the Amalekites (Exo 17:11-13).

The javelin is the symbol of judgment and the sign for victory. In Joshua we see here the picture of the Spirit of Christ Who is powerfully present among God's people and works for them in power in the judgment on their enemies. Thus we may look upon Christ in glory and know that we have victory in Him.

The men stand up from the ambush, possibly on the exhortation of what God gives in their hearts. We see Him here as the hidden origin of all actions. They know what to do because He is in charge. We will always be dependent on this leadership. Then those who have fled turn around and take part in the conquest.

After the lesson of Ai God is again with His people. Israel eradicates Ai in obedience to what God has said. Attached to this obedience is Joshua's at-

titude, who holds his hand with the javelin stretched out as a sign of confidence in complete victory. That the hand with the javelin is not withdrawn until the enemy has been completely defeated demonstrates perseverance.

This contains an important lesson for us. Only through persevering confidence victory can be achieved. This is missing with Joash, the king of Israel in the days of Elisha. When Elisha tells him to strike the ground with his arrows, he does so only three times. Joash should have struck much more often, but because he stops too early, his victory is not total (2Kgs 13:17-19). It is about persevering until the end, until the last enemy is defeated.

Joshua perseveres, as do the believers of the church in Philadelphia, who are praised by the Lord Jesus for having kept “the word of My perseverance” (Rev 3:10). The “word of My perseverance” also means that this perseverance is found in Himself: “May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ” (2Thes 3:5). We can only take possession of spiritual blessings by persevering in confidence on the Lord.

At Jericho everything is for the Lord, at Ai everything is for the people. First all for the Lord, then we receive our share, as the Lord may determine. Furthermore, Ai becomes a desolation. As said, Ai means ‘ruin’ and that is what God’s people make of it.

The command given by Joshua regarding the dead body of the king of Ai (verse 29), shows that he knows the Word of God. He acts according to what God has said about it in the law: “If a man has committed a sin worthy of death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his corpse shall not hang all night on the tree, but you shall surely bury him on the same day (for he who is hanged is accursed of God), so that you do not defile your land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance” (Deu 21:22-23).

The territory of Ai is part of the inheritance. It must not be defiled. A hanged man is a curse to God. There is curse for him who hangs on a tree and for those who do not abide in the works of the law. That is the teaching of Galatians 3. The hanged king of Ai shows that the Lord Jesus has taken that place for everyone who believes in Him and has become the cursed One on the tree. The consequence for us is that we have been redeemed:

“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”” (Gal 3:13). The law does not apply literally to us. The curse of the law no longer strikes us because the Lord Jesus bore it. Whoever believes will never again come under the curse of the law.

### **Verses 30-32 | The Altar in Mount Ebal**

*30 Then Joshua built an altar to the LORD, the God of Israel, in Mount Ebal, 31 just as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded the sons of Israel, as it is written in the book of the law of Moses, an altar of uncut stones on which no man had wielded an iron [tool]; and they offered burnt offerings on it to the LORD, and sacrificed peace offerings. 32 He wrote there on the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he had written, in the presence of the sons of Israel.*

Joshua does what God has commanded him to do when they would have entered the land: “You shall write on the stones all the words of this law very distinctly” (Deu 27:8). By building the altar Joshua claims the land for the LORD. He has already shown that the land belongs to the LORD by acting according to the precept in view of the dead body of the king of Ai (verse 29).

The altar is also a picture of the Lord Jesus, it is not worked, it is all perfect. As He is, He has become the altar on which offerings are brought. No sin offerings are brought at this altar, but burnt offerings and peace offerings. It speaks of the fact that the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus is pleasing to God (burnt offering) and that for God’s people it is the basis for fellowship with Him and with each other (peace offering).

Joshua builds the altar in Mount Ebal, the mountain of the curse (Deu 11:29; 27:4,13). We must learn to say ‘amen’ to the curses. Then we will experience the blessings of Mount Gerizim. Sacrifices are made on the mountain of the curse. For us, through the offering of Christ, the curses have been removed and the blessings have become our part.

### **Verses 33-35 | Read All the Words of the Law**

*33 All Israel with their elders and officers and their judges were standing on both sides of the ark before the Levitical priests who carried the ark of the cov-*

*enant of the LORD, the stranger as well as the native. Half of them [stood] in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, just as Moses the servant of the LORD had given command at first to bless the people of Israel. 34 Then afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessing and the curse, according to all that is written in the book of the law. 35 There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded which Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel with the women and the little ones and the strangers who were living among them.*

The ark takes the central place. Then the law is read. God gives His Word in connection with the ark, the altar and the blessings. In Deuteronomy 27 the people must write the law on the altar. Whosoever abides by the Word of God will abide, and will gain victories in the land. Whosoever does not observe the Word of God will suffer, and will not enjoy the blessings of God's good land and His good blessings.

What is the law in Deuteronomy 27? There the people are given the task to make an altar on Mount Ebal and to sacrifice on it and to write the law on it (Deu 27:4-8). But what is the law? It is the whole content of the book of Deuteronomy. In it we see first the blessings of the land and then the place where the LORD makes his Name dwell. We also see the conditions to enjoy the blessings in that place. Although we are not under the law, obedience is also the condition for us to enjoy the blessings. If not, we will bear the curse.

## Joshua 9

### Introduction

After we have seen in Joshua 7-8 at Ai what is the result of relying on our own strength, we see in Joshua 9 at Gibeon what is the result of relying on our own wisdom. The lesson for us is not to trust in our own strength and wisdom, but in “Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1Cor 1:24b).

The Gibeonites succeed with a trick to escape the judgment under which they fall. Why did the Israelites not discover this trick? The trick succeeds because they “did not ask for the counsel of the LORD” (verse 14). There is only one way for us to escape the tricks of the devil and that is by obedience to the command: “Put on the full armor of God” (Eph 6:11a).

The enemy uses two means to harm and cause damage to the people of God. One means is violence and the other is craftiness. In the first case, we read about the devil as someone who “prowls around like a roaring lion” (1Pet 5:8). In the other case he is called “an angel of light” (2Cor 11:14).

### **Verses 1-2 | The Enemies Gathers Themselves Together**

*1 Now it came about when all the kings who were beyond the Jordan, in the hill country and in the lowland and on all the coast of the Great Sea toward Lebanon, the Hittite and the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite, heard of it, 2 that they gathered themselves together with one accord to fight with Joshua and with Israel.*

The enemies join forces. It is possible that the defeat suffered by Israel at Ai has encouraged them and given them an opportunity to resist this people.

These nations, who are always at war with each other, gather together “with one accord to fight with Joshua and with Israel”. This is always so with regard to what is of God. Hate against God and His truth is a means that unites all the enemies of God and makes them forget their disagreements and quarrels (Lk 23:12; Acts 4:27). We must always remember that the kings of Canaan are a picture of the rulers of the spiritual world. “For



our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual [forces] of wickedness in the heavenly [places]" (Eph 6:12).

Heathen nations may conflict with each other on earth, but the demonic powers behind them are in full agreement. They are controlled by satan, who always aims to kill as many people as possible. He is the murderer from the beginning (Jn 8:44). He wants to kill all people, while his main goal is to harm God's people as much as possible.

### Verses 3-5 | The Trick of the Gibeonites

*3 When the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and to Ai, 4 they also acted craftily and set out as envoys, and took worn-out sacks on their donkeys, and wineskins worn-out and torn and mended, 5 and worn-out and patched sandals on their feet, and worn-out clothes on themselves; and all the bread of their provision was dry [and] had become crumbled.*

In the spiritual struggle we are particularly concerned with "the schemes of the devil" (Eph 6:11). The struggle in Ephesians 6 is not a struggle to conquer the land, but to defend it. That's why the description of the armor is at the end of the letter, after all blessings have been described. It is about staying standing after the victory, which is only possible if we have put on the full armor of God. Only then we "will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil" (Eph 6:11).

We also need the armor of God to "be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm" (Eph 6:13). With his schemes, the enemy often has results in territories where his power is broken. His schemes are more to fear than his strength. With his schemes he seduces the people, but with his strength he meets the Lord.

The people of Gibeon have heard what Joshua did to Jericho and Ai. Therefore they do not seek a battle, but resort to deceit. They work with consideration to save their lives, which they know are in danger. To a certain extent, that is sensible. But there is a better method to save their lives than by trickery. Rahab saved her life and that of her family by faith. This we also see later with a Canaanite woman, so a woman originally belonging to this people under the curse, who asks for mercy (Mt 15:22-28).

With these Gibeonites, however, there is no question of faith. They prefer their own method. They proceed with human caution and use beautiful, impressive language. They speak of the LORD and what He has done. They present themselves as religious people. Thus they mislead the people of God and gain access to them, which is possible by the unfaithfulness of the people.

Their whole appearance is worn out; everything they have is old. The older something is, the better it is, according to the traditionalists. The old church, the old way of doing things. But the old is not simply better because it is old. The old is only better when it comes from the Lord, He Himself is “what was from the beginning” (1Jn 1:1a). Thus, the old ‘speaking in tongues’ is something that comes to the fore again in professing Christianity. It is not only old, but also worn out, it has had its time (1Cor 13:8). These are things that impress the people. But what is worn out must be removed.

### Verses 6-8 | The Gibeonites Come in Gilgal

*6 They went to Joshua to the camp at Gilgal and said to him and to the men of Israel, “We have come from a far country; now therefore, make a covenant with us.” 7 The men of Israel said to the Hivites, “Perhaps you are living within our land; how then shall we make a covenant with you?” 8 But they said to Joshua, “We are your servants.” Then Joshua said to them, “Who are you and where do you come from?”*

Joshua is back in Gilgal, the right place. But he is not in the good mind to recognize the stratagem. These people come from a city in the land that needs to be destroyed, but they pretend they come from a far country. Unlike Joshua, the people express the assumption that they may not come from so far after all. There is suspicion in them. But why don't they ask further? They fall into the trap of their own wisdom.

The request to make a covenant with these people sounds attractive. Israel is surrounded by enemies, who are united against them to fight them. A covenant with the Gibeonites will make them stronger, they think. Such a submission may seem sensible, but it leaves the LORD out of consideration. If God is their strength alone, allies can only set aside the necessary dependence on God. Israel does not need allies!

### Verses 9-13 | The Gibeonites Justify Themselves

*9 They said to him, "Your servants have come from a very far country because of the fame of the LORD your God; for we have heard the report of Him and all that He did in Egypt, 10 and all that He did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon king of Heshbon and to Og king of Bashan who was at Ashtaroth. 11 So our elders and all the inhabitants of our country spoke to us, saying, 'Take provisions in your hand for the journey, and go to meet them and say to them, "We are your servants; now then, make a covenant with us."' 12 This our bread [was] warm [when] we took it for our provisions out of our houses on the day that we left to come to you; but now behold, it is dry and has become crumbled. 13 These wineskins which we filled were new, and behold, they are torn; and these our clothes and our sandals are worn out because of the very long journey."*

The Gibeonites use flattery. In the same way, there are nominal Christians who would like to join the believers of a local church and say pleasant things about God and the Lord Jesus. They talk as the believers like to hear it. Therefore, the church must be careful and always ask for the Lord's will when people want to have fellowship. This will keep them from being misled on the one hand, and on the other hand, they will not painstakingly repel believers who belong to God's people. All who meet the conditions of the Scriptures must be accepted in the church.

The Gibeonites do not speak about what happened to Jericho and Ai. They behave as if they know nothing about it. They only talk about what can be assumed to be known from people who come from far away. They pretend that they are not aware of what has happened recently. Their testimony of the long journey is supported by their worn out clothes and dried bread.

Joshua and the heads find their story plausible. The remarks about the LORD sound respectful. Their whole appearance seems to underline what they say of themselves. It is sufficient to give up the necessary vigilance and to receive this company.

### Verses 14-15 | Peace With the Gibeonites

*14 So the men [of Israel] took some of their provisions, and did not ask for the counsel of the LORD. 15 Joshua made peace with them and made a covenant*

*with them, to let them live; and the leaders of the congregation swore [an oath] to them.*

The Israelites take their bread. By testing the ‘proofs’ themselves they come to the conclusion that the story of the Gibeonites is true. Their senses are the norm. That is the error. By taking their bread, they express their fellowship with them spiritually. Now they can’t go back. Where human senses and perceptions become the norm of assessment, the enemy has gained access. Then the LORD will not be consulted. He remains out of sight. The remark of the Holy Spirit “and did not ask for the counsel of the LORD” speaks volumes.

Not asking for the counsel of the LORD, for a statement of Him, brings the people to a covenant and thus to something that is forbidden by an earlier statement of Him. If we take steps without having asked for the Lord’s will and thus without having received a clear answer from Him, the consequences of those steps will always haunt us. Joshua and the heads make this covenant. The most responsible take the lead in the error. Satan has succeeded in his stratagem.

Jericho is taken by faith. After an initial defeat with Ai, that city is also taken when the people have removed the ban from their midst. Both cities fall into the hands of the people because obedience to what the LORD has said has been acted upon. The third city, Gibeon, is not conquered because the people did not ask for the will of the LORD.

### **Verses 16-20 | The Trick Discovered**

*16 It came about at the end of three days after they had made a covenant with them, that they heard that they were neighbors and that they were living within their land. 17 Then the sons of Israel set out and came to their cities on the third day. Now their cities [were] Gibeon and Chephirah and Beeroth and Kiriath-jearim. 18 The sons of Israel did not strike them because the leaders of the congregation had sworn to them by the LORD the God of Israel. And the whole congregation grumbled against the leaders. 19 But all the leaders said to the whole congregation, “We have sworn to them by the LORD, the God of Israel, and now we cannot touch them. 20 This we will do to them, even let them live, so that wrath will not be upon us for the oath which we swore to them.”*

The deceit becomes public if the people want to destroy Gibeon and other cities. Now they have to face the consequences. They have to spare these men. They have sworn this to their loss: "He swears to his own hurt and does not change" (Psa 15:4c). A wrong deed must not be made worse by not wanting to bear the consequences. Later Saul's house must be punished because Saul wanted to kill the Gibeonites (2Sam 21:1-9).

We can apply this as follows. Someone may have been wrongly admitted to the Lord's Table because of our carelessness. As long as such a person doesn't do anything that Scripture identifies as sin, we should tolerate him and bow under the Lord's discipline because of our unfaithfulness. Similarly, even if a believer is married to an unbeliever, this marriage cannot be undone by divorce. That the consequences of sin are not always taken away, we see in the life of the ex-drug addict who has destroyed his health by his drug use. The consequences remain. Yet the Lord will give the power to bear those consequences if there is sincere acknowledgment and confession of the sin. Sin is acting in self-will, acting without consulting Him first.

### Verses 21-27 | Hewers of Wood and Drawers of Water

*21 The leaders said to them, "Let them live." So they became hewers of wood and drawers of water for the whole congregation, just as the leaders had spoken to them. 22 Then Joshua called for them and spoke to them, saying, "Why have you deceived us, saying, 'We are very far from you,' when you are living within our land? 23 Now therefore, you are cursed, and you shall never cease being slaves, both hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of my God." 24 So they answered Joshua and said, "Because it was certainly told your servants that the LORD your God had commanded His servant Moses to give you all the land, and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land before you; therefore we feared greatly for our lives because of you, and have done this thing. 25 Now behold, we are in your hands; do as it seems good and right in your sight to do to us." 26 Thus he did to them, and delivered them from the hands of the sons of Israel, and they did not kill them. 27 But Joshua made them that day hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation and for the altar of the LORD, to this day, in the place which He would choose.*

The Gibeonites are as slaves in the house of God, not as sons. Joshua curses them and condemns them to do the humblest work (cf. Deu 29:11). They fetch wood for the altar, but are not offerors themselves. They fetch water, but not to become clean by it themselves. They are a plague to the people of God because the people have given them access to the service to God without asking God. They serve, however, not out of love, but out of fear.

The Israelites want to kill them, but Joshua saves them (verse 26). It is better to bow before the Lord than to eradicate the evil that has come in through our fault against God's will. Sometimes He wants it to exist, to constantly remind us that we can only prevent evil if we consult Him before we do anything.

Later in the history of the Gibeonites in the midst of Israel, God's grace also becomes visible. Ishmaiah, one of the heroes of David, is a Gibeonite (1Chr 12:4). There is also a Gibeonite, Melatiah, and other men of Gibeon, who have returned with the people of God from captivity in Babylon and help to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem (Neh 3:7).

## Joshua 10

### Introduction

The five kings mentioned (verse 3) unite to form a powerful army to punish apostate Gibeon. When Joshua gets the request to help, he is at Gilgal. From there he leaves (verse 7) and the LORD gives him a great victory. Then he goes back to Gilgal. Even after he has taken several cities in southern Canaan, he returns to Gilgal (verse 43).

Gilgal is the place where the people have been circumcised (Jos 5:2-9). For us it means that the Lord Jesus bore the judgment we deserved. To go from victory to victory, we must always remember what the Lord Jesus did for us. Otherwise we will rely on ourselves and the defeat will come.

Joshua is heard in a way no one has ever experienced (verse 14). We can also receive such hearing if we trust that the Lord Jesus will fight for us.

In Joshua 10 Joshua comes to our attention in a special way. It is a different Joshua from the failing Joshua of the previous chapters. He shows here the Divine power that characterizes him so much and in which he looks so much like the Lord Jesus in His acting through the Holy Spirit. With this he is also a picture of the individual believer who can come to powerful acts of faith through the Holy Spirit.

After his failure in Joshua 7 he goes to battle against Ai in Joshua 8. He stretched out his hand with the javelin until all enemies are defeated (Jos 8:26). The same order we see in Joshua 9-10. After falling into Gibeon's stratagem in Joshua 9, in Joshua 10 he uncompromisingly attacks the enemy in spiritual power. Joshua is the head of the people. In this chapter they will gain experiences that they would never have had if they had not been weak, such as the standing still of the sun and the stopping of the moon and God's use of hailstones to defeat enemies.

After weakness come the greatest victories and experiences of faith. That is no excuse for weakness and unbelief. Nevertheless, grace proves itself stronger afterward. That is typical of grace. God did not want the fall into

sin either. Yet thereby His grace shines in a way that would not otherwise have been possible. We may experience this in our lives.

### Verses 1-5 | The Amorites Unite Against Gibeon

*1 Now it came about when Adoni-zedek king of Jerusalem heard that Joshua had captured Ai, and had utterly destroyed it (just as he had done to Jericho and its king, so he had done to Ai and its king), and that the inhabitants of Gibeon had made peace with Israel and were within their land, 2 that he feared greatly, because Gibeon [was] a great city, like one of the royal cities, and because it was greater than Ai, and all its men [were] mighty. 3 Therefore Adoni-zedek king of Jerusalem sent [word] to Hoham king of Hebron and to Piram king of Jarmuth and to Japhia king of Lachish and to Debir king of Eglon, saying, 4 "Come up to me and help me, and let us attack Gibeon, for it has made peace with Joshua and with the sons of Israel." 5 So the five kings of the Amorites, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, [and] the king of Eglon, gathered together and went up, they with all their armies, and camped by Gibeon and fought against it.*

After the Gibeonite trick, the enemies unite and form a large army. This is the result of the weakness of God's people shown in the previous chapter. But God knows how to use the failure of His people and even the wicked actions of man to His glorification. "But they do not know the thoughts of the LORD, and they do not understand His purpose; for He has gathered them like sheaves to the threshing floor" (Mic 4:12; cf. Rev 17:17).

Adoni-zedek – which means 'lord of justice' – the king of Jerusalem, takes the initiative to form a common army to fight Israel. He heads the enemy allies. Here for the first time Jerusalem is mentioned, apart from Genesis 14, where Melchizedek – which means 'king of righteousness' – the king of Salem, is mentioned (Gen 14:18). Melchizedek blesses Abraham, unlike Adoni-zedek who heads the enemies of Abraham's offspring. Adoni-zedek is a picture of the antichrist who will also be king of Jerusalem.

The application for us is that the further we get into the land, the more we meet an enemy that defends itself more and more, making the fight more and more fierce. Those who do not know the heavenly blessings, do not know any struggle in the land. Often the reason for not knowing the



blessings is that one does not want to make an effort to get to know them. The believer has to make spiritual things his own. To be aware that the spiritual blessings are there is something else than to really know them.

Gibeon is a big city, its men are heroes and want to stay alive. Therefore they have entered into the people of God with deceit. This requires a certain amount of courage. They don't belong to the people, but neither to the world, which is now hostile to them. They are never really happy. First they are afraid of Israel, now they are afraid of their former friends.

### Verse 6 | The Gibeonites Call Joshua for Help

*6 Then the men of Gibeon sent [word] to Joshua to the camp at Gilgal, saying, "Do not abandon your servants; come up to us quickly and save us and help us, for all the kings of the Amorites that live in the hill country have assembled against us."*

Through their friendship with Israel, Israel is now also obliged to work for them. Israel does not use them, but they need Israel. 'Gibeonites' among us can be influential in the world, but they always lack spiritual strength. For this they call upon the people of God. They are just a plague and a burden. But God stands above it and can still use it to fulfill His plans. He has allowed it for this.

### Verses 7-15 | The LORD Defeats the Amorites

*7 So Joshua went up from Gilgal, he and all the people of war with him and all the valiant warriors. 8 The LORD said to Joshua, "Do not fear them, for I have given them into your hands; not one of them shall stand before you." 9 So Joshua came upon them suddenly by marching all night from Gilgal. 10 And the LORD confounded them before Israel, and He slew them with a great slaughter at Gibeon, and pursued them by the way of the ascent of Beth-horon and struck them as far as Azekah and Makkedah. 11 As they fled from before Israel, [while] they were at the descent of Beth-horon, the LORD threw large stones from heaven on them as far as Azekah, and they died; [there were] more who died from the hailstones than those whom the sons of Israel killed with the sword. 12 Then Joshua spoke to the LORD in the day when the LORD delivered up the Amorites before the sons of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel,*

*“O sun, stand still at Gibeon,  
And O moon in the valley of Aijalon.”*

13 *So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped,  
Until the nation avenged themselves of their enemies.*

*Is it not written in the book of Jashar? And the sun stopped in the middle of the sky and did not hasten to go [down] for about a whole day. 14 There was no day like that before it or after it, when the LORD listened to the voice of a man; for the LORD fought for Israel. 15 Then Joshua and all Israel with him returned to the camp to Gilgal.*

God wants His blessing to emerge from the failure of His own. If we see that, fear will disappear (verse 8). If faith is directed toward God, that is, if we trust in Him, we can continue trustingly. God has promised them victory. They must act, there must be fight. But when fighting with the LORD's promise in mind, fight is only victory.

They move in the night. The attack is surprising. The LORD is fighting along. He confuses the enemy, so that the people can gain victory. The LORD has His own weapon in the hailstones: “Have you seen the storehouses of the hail, which I have reserved for the time of distress, for the day of war and battle?” (Job 38:22b-23; cf. Exo 9:24-25). With it He kills more than His people do by the sword.

The prophetic application is obvious when we think of the book of Revelation, where we also see hailstones coming as judgment from heaven (Rev 16:21). The events in Joshua indicate the final victory. If we rejoice for the appearance of the Lord Jesus, we are also pleased that God will cleanse the earth of all evil and that our victories have also come to an end in the final victory. Then there is no more battle to fight.

From what Joshua says, speaks an enormous faith (verse 12). The Lord Jesus told us that we can move mountains if we have faith (Mt 21:21-22; Mk 9:23). Joshua is aware of the blessing God wants to give. Therefore he turns to God in faith and commands the sun and moon to stand still in the Name of God. He speaks his words before the eyes of the people, making them all witnesses of the consequences of his statement of faith. It gives his faith an extra dimension. He is sure of the hearing and bears witness to it.

The people did not have that faith, but after seeing the hearing they will be strengthened by it. It may also have that effect on us.

We live in the day of victory, fighting against the wickedness in the heavenly places. The battle is not only between Joshua and Adoni-zedek, but between the God of Israel and the idols of the Canaanites, which are in reality the demonic powers that are concealed behind these idols. Baal is the sun god and Astarte the moon god. The enemy believes that the sun and the moon are on their side. Through Joshua's faith, they are fixed in their movement as proof that the God of Israel is truly and solely God.

We have the struggle against spiritual rulers and powers. Joshua seems to understand that it is not only about the kings of flesh and blood, but about those they are led by and who are on the side of the enemies. Joshua asks God to show His power over the evil powers.

When Joshua commands the sun to stand still, he fulfills God's purpose, Whose power is all-powerful and Whose command sun and moon obey. Idolaters may call to the sun and the moon for help, that is to say to Baal and Astarte, but the LORD, the supreme One, shows to His people that the powers of heaven are but his servants.

When Joshua says "sun, stand still", it is not scientific language, but what is said in everyday language. Everyone says that the sun rises and sets. On that day the sun stays in the sky twelve hours longer. It is a very special, unique day. The voice of Joshua is heard as never was the voice of anyone else. He is a picture of the Lord Jesus.

We can also see the sun as a picture of the Lord Jesus. When the sun stands still, the light remains longer. The sun does not set over the world until the believers are caught up. The believers "are all sons of light and sons of day" (1Thes 5:5a). By the power of the Spirit of Christ, they can already in faith achieve victories that God will once publicly achieve over the whole earth.

We already see the Lord Jesus. He is heard by God in His death and resurrection. He is the Sun at God's right hand. We live in the day that does not end until full victory is achieved. We see Him to Whom "all authority has been given ... in heaven and on earth" (Mt 28:18). The demonic powers shudder and tremble before this light of the sun.

The “the book of Jashar” or “the book of the upright” is a history book in which certain acts are recorded, possibly in poetic form, which are generally not included in the Scriptures (2Sam 1:18; cf. Num 21:14; 1Kgs 14:19,29). It is ancient Hebrew literature that has been lost. If it fits into God’s plan for His Word, Bible writers quote from it (cf. Tit 1:12).

### Verses 16-27 | Joshua Kills the Five Kings

*16 Now these five kings had fled and hidden themselves in the cave at Makkedah. 17 It was told Joshua, saying, “The five kings have been found hidden in the cave at Makkedah.” 18 Joshua said, “Roll large stones against the mouth of the cave, and assign men by it to guard them, 19 but do not stay [there] yourselves; pursue your enemies and attack them in the rear. Do not allow them to enter their cities, for the LORD your God has delivered them into your hand.” 20 It came about when Joshua and the sons of Israel had finished slaying them with a very great slaughter, until they were destroyed, and the survivors [who] remained of them had entered the fortified cities, 21 that all the people returned to the camp to Joshua at Makkedah in peace. No one uttered a word against any of the sons of Israel. 22 Then Joshua said, “Open the mouth of the cave and bring these five kings out to me from the cave.” 23 They did so, and brought these five kings out to him from the cave: the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, [and] the king of Eglon. 24 When they brought these kings out to Joshua, Joshua called for all the men of Israel, and said to the chiefs of the men of war who had gone with him, “Come near, put your feet on the necks of these kings.” So they came near and put their feet on their necks. 25 Joshua then said to them, “Do not fear or be dismayed! Be strong and courageous, for thus the LORD will do to all your enemies with whom you fight.” 26 So afterward Joshua struck them and put them to death, and he hanged them on five trees; and they hung on the trees until evening. 27 It came about at sunset that Joshua gave a command, and they took them down from the trees and threw them into the cave where they had hidden themselves, and put large stones over the mouth of the cave, to this very day.*

In battle we don’t always have time to consider. Therefore, we must always listen to the Lord Jesus. The kings who have fled are first locked up, then the battle continues and later they deal with the kings. For every action the people receive instructions from Joshua.

Because the sun continues to shine, the kings flee from the light and seek the darkness of a cave to hide (Jn 3:20; cf. Rev 6:15-17). Their self-sought safety becomes first their prison and then their grave. First they are locked up there, kept for the moment of judgment (cf. 2Pet 2:4; Jude 1:6). When the time for this has come, they are called out of darkness by name (verse 23), brought into light, and killed (verse 26).

The kings have escaped the hailstones, like Pharaoh and his horsemen escaped the plagues of Egypt. But escaping judgment is only temporary and for a purpose. God has let Pharaoh and his horsemen escape, "to show", as He says to Pharaoh "you My power and in order to proclaim My name through all the earth" (Exo 9:16). This is also the case with these kings. It makes the final judgment all the clearer and includes a message, an encouragement, for the people.

Furthermore, some of them manage to escape (verse 20). That also fits in with God's plan. There are always enemies left. That determines for us that we must always remain vigilant.

The people return to the camp unharmed. The fact that no one dared to utter a word against them (verse 21) indicates that no Israelite has been in trouble for a single moment during the battle or pursuit (cf. Exo 11:7). Also, their actions were entirely in accordance with God's will, so that no one could come up with and express a complaint about a wrong treatment.

The kings must be humiliated. This can seem overconfident and the danger of becoming overconfident is always present. We are never so weak as when we have achieved a great victory. But here it is an encouragement to the people. Every enemy will fall down for the people. Haman, the hater of the Jews, is an example of this: "If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of Jewish origin, you will not overcome him, but will surely fall before him" (Est 6:13b).

The people see the big, impressive enemies. Joshua orders the captains to put their feet on the kings' necks. The putting of the foot on the neck is a proof of the complete victory and for the conquered a proof of complete humiliation (1Kgs 5:3; Psa 110:1). Thus, according to the word of Moses, they step, spiritually spoken, on the heights – the heights we see here in these great men – of their enemies (Deu 33:29).

In the same way we are encouraged by the following promise: “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet” (Rom 16:20a). This is not Paul boasting, but speaking the language of faith. Thus will all enemies be to the Lord Jesus as a footstool for Him (1Cor 15:25; Heb 1:13).

Joshua makes it clear through his command (verse 24) that there is no power left in the feared kings. They must accept this in faith. There is no more reason for fear (verse 25). Joshua kills the kings. This is also the final victory for the Lord Jesus. He kills His enemies. God gave “Him authority to execute judgment, because He is [the] Son of Man” (Jn 5:27). We, the church, are involved. We will judge the world and even angels, that is to say, rule it, govern it (1Cor 6:2-3).

### **Verses 28-43 | The Cities in the Negev Captured**

*28 Now Joshua captured Makkedah on that day, and struck it and its king with the edge of the sword; he utterly destroyed it and every person who was in it. He left no survivor. Thus he did to the king of Makkedah just as he had done to the king of Jericho. 29 Then Joshua and all Israel with him passed on from Makkedah to Libnah, and fought against Libnah. 30 The LORD gave it also with its king into the hands of Israel, and he struck it and every person who [was] in it with the edge of the sword. He left no survivor in it. Thus he did to its king just as he had done to the king of Jericho. 31 And Joshua and all Israel with him passed on from Libnah to Lachish, and they camped by it and fought against it. 32 The LORD gave Lachish into the hands of Israel; and he captured it on the second day, and struck it and every person who [was] in it with the edge of the sword, according to all that he had done to Libnah. 33 Then Horam king of Gezer came up to help Lachish, and Joshua defeated him and his people until he had left him no survivor. 34 And Joshua and all Israel with him passed on from Lachish to Eglon, and they camped by it and fought against it. 35 They captured it on that day and struck it with the edge of the sword; and he utterly destroyed that day every person who [was] in it, according to all that he had done to Lachish. 36 Then Joshua and all Israel with him went up from Eglon to Hebron, and they fought against it. 37 They captured it and struck it and its king and all its cities and all the persons who [were] in it with the edge of the sword. He left no survivor, according to all that he had done to Eglon. And he utterly destroyed it and every person who [was] in it. 38 Then Joshua and all*

*Israel with him returned to Debir, and they fought against it. 39 He captured it and its king and all its cities, and they struck them with the edge of the sword, and utterly destroyed every person [who was] in it. He left no survivor. Just as he had done to Hebron, so he did to Debir and its king, as he had also done to Libnah and its king. 40 Thus Joshua struck all the land, the hill country and the Negev and the lowland and the slopes and all their kings. He left no survivor, but he utterly destroyed all who breathed, just as the LORD, the God of Israel, had commanded. 41 Joshua struck them from Kadesh-barnea even as far as Gaza, and all the country of Goshen even as far as Gibeon. 42 Joshua captured all these kings and their lands at one time, because the LORD, the God of Israel, fought for Israel. 43 So Joshua and all Israel with him returned to the camp at Gilgal.*

Striking in this section is the recurring expression “Joshua and all Israel with him” (verses 29,31,34,36,38,43). Here we can see a picture of the unity of the Lord Jesus and His own in judgment (Rev 19:14-15a).

Joshua captures the cities of three of the five kings: Lachis (verses 31-32), Eglon (verses 34-35) and Hebron (verses 36-37). The other two cities, Jerusalem and Jarmuth, are not yet captured. In this part of the land Gezer is also defeated (verse 33). Horam, the king of Gezer, wants to come with his army to the aid of Lachis, that has lost its king. He appears to be interfering in the matter to his own destruction.

Joshua also captures three more royal cities. First Makkedah (verse 28), in the neighborhood of which the five kings fled (verse 16). Now that Joshua and his armed forces have come there to persecute and kill the kings who have fled, he captures by the way the city. The flight of the kings thus accelerates the fall of this city. After that he also captures Libnah (verses 29-30) and Debir (verses 38-39).

The king of Hebron is killed (verse 37). But, as we might notice, he is already killed among the five (verses 23,26), isn't it? One solution may be that a new king has risen immediately after his death. Enemies quickly follow each other to resist God's people.

We could suppose that, now that the army has already entered the land so far and conquered it, they can also set their camp a bit further. But the army stays always in Gilgal (verse 43; verse 7). There the army is always

reminded of the circumcision. This is necessary to gain strength for the next battle. That the LORD fights for Israel does not diminish the need to be reminded of the judgment of sin, of flesh. We must always return to the place that suits us before God: the complete discarding of ourselves. There is a time to act and there is also a time to keep silent and to place ourselves before God so that we may be able to act.

Our consciousness of who we are we gain when we look at the death of Christ on the cross. That is the starting point for the battle in which the Lord is leading. Just then we will give Him everything in His hands. If the flesh starts to boast, the next defeat is a fact. Then there is no place for Him and He cannot fight for us. We return, not to be circumcised again, but to be reminded of the words of the Lord Jesus: "The flesh profits nothing" (Jn 6:63). If we remember that, we will perform the command: "Put to death therefore your members which [are] upon the earth" (Col 3:5 Darby Translation).



# Joshua 11

## Introduction

Joshua 10 and Joshua 11 belong together. They describe the battle against the kings of the south (Joshua 10) and of the north (Joshua 11). In two great wars Joshua broke the power of all those kings. A difference between the first and the second war is that in the second war, that against the kings of the north, no miracles happen.

After the conquests in the south, it is now the turn of the north. Joshua experiences again that the LORD is with him. He moves on victoriously and leaves nothing alive. On the LORD's command everything must be destroyed. It even says that it is of the LORD to harden the hearts of the enemies (verse 20).

Does the LORD wish then the destruction of these peoples? It says: "God our Savior, ... desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1Tim 2:3b-4) and "not wishing for any to perish" (2Pet 3:9), doesn't it? Yes, but the judgment only comes when the measure of sin is full and man has not wanted to repent. Then comes the judgment of the hardening and there is no more grace. This is why the following still applies to every human being today: "Today, if you would hear His voice, do not harden your hearts" (Psa 95:7b-8a).

## **Verses 1-5 | The Kings of the North**

*1 Then it came about, when Jabin king of Hazor heard [of it], that he sent to Jobab king of Madon and to the king of Shimron and to the king of Achshaph, 2 and to the kings who were of the north in the hill country, and in the Arabah—south of Chinneroth and in the lowland and on the heights of Dor on the west— 3 to the Canaanite on the east and on the west, and the Amorite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Jebusite in the hill country, and the Hivite at the foot of Hermon in the land of Mizpeh. 4 They came out, they and all their armies with them, [as] many people as the sand that is on the seashore, with very many horses and chariots. 5 So all of these kings having agreed to meet, came and encamped together at the waters of Merom, to fight against Israel.*

Jabin, that means ‘the wise’ or ‘the intelligent’, the king of Hazor, is not just any king. He rules over the head of all kingdoms (verse 10). He is the king of the most powerful empire. We can therefore see in him a picture of the head of all demons, of satan himself. Satan has many instruments, henchmen, who are subject to him and execute his will. These are the evil powers, the demons, in the heavenly places. With them we have to do, not so much directly with satan himself, but with his angels. In Hazor we meet the capital of all kings, the main stronghold of demons.

Our spiritual struggle is about not only overcoming the demons, but overcoming the head of the enemy, the evil one. John says in his first letter that the young men did so. He says that they “have overcome the evil one” (1Jn 2:14b).

The power of Hazor lies in his crowd. He comes up with a huge alliance. Here, too, peoples are gathering who are often in conflict with each other, but who are now going up together to fight against God’s people (cf. Lk 23:12). For God’s people it is an opportunity to fight this battle, and precisely because the enemy has gathered in this way to achieve a great victory. When we see the enemy coming to us in great power, it is an opportunity to reveal God’s power.

The hostile armies gather at the waters of Merom. Here too we see a picture of the great battle in the end times, where all the kings of the earth gather to fight against God. In reality it is God who gathers them there to destroy them in one fell: “For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty. (“Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame.”) And they gathered them together to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-Magedon” (Rev 16:14-16). The battle in Har-Magedon will take place in the vicinity of Merom mentioned here.

### **Verses 6-9 | The Kings and Their Armies Defeated**

6 Then the LORD said to Joshua, “Do not be afraid because of them, for tomorrow at this time I will deliver all of them slain before Israel; you shall hamstring

*their horses and burn their chariots with fire.” 7 So Joshua and all the people of war with him came upon them suddenly by the waters of Merom, and attacked them. 8 The LORD delivered them into the hand of Israel, so that they defeated them, and pursued them as far as Great Sidon and Misrephoth-maim and the valley of Mizpeh to the east; and they struck them until no survivor was left to them. 9 Joshua did to them as the LORD had told him; he hamstringed their horses and burned their chariots with fire.*

The LORD encourages Joshua and says to him that he should not be afraid (verse 6). Often we are afraid instead of seeing the privilege of facing a large crowd. But God always wants a great victory by a few. He wants us to rely on Him (Psa 20:8) and “striving together for the faith of the gospel; in no way alarmed by [the] opponents” (Phil 1:27b-28a). We have to learn this. That is why God allows us to gain such experiences.

The enemy’s means of combat must be disabled and destroyed. That makes reuse impossible, both for the enemy and for Israel. God does not want His people to use the means of the world to achieve victories through which the world can claim the honor of victory. Each victory may only be attributed to Him Who actually gives it.

### **Verses 10-14 | Judgment on the Cities**

*10 Then Joshua turned back at that time, and captured Hazor and struck its king with the sword; for Hazor formerly was the head of all these kingdoms. 11 They struck every person who was in it with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying [them]; there was no one left who breathed. And he burned Hazor with fire. 12 Joshua captured all the cities of these kings, and all their kings, and he struck them with the edge of the sword, [and] utterly destroyed them; just as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded. 13 However, Israel did not burn any cities that stood on their mounds, except Hazor alone, [which] Joshua burned. 14 All the spoil of these cities and the cattle, the sons of Israel took as their plunder; but they struck every man with the edge of the sword, until they had destroyed them. They left no one who breathed.*

Hazor is taken. Because it is a mighty city, the human mind might reason that it could be a suitable capital for Israel. But God does not allow the seat of worldly power and influence to become the seat of His people, for His

people depend solely on Him. Hazor will not become the new capital of Israel, but will be completely destroyed. God will not leave any trace of the power that has ruled before.

Unfortunately, by the unfaithfulness of God's people this city is rebuilt. In the time of the judges it appears that this city even rules over God's people for some time. This happens as a result of the discipline God has to impose on His people because of their unfaithfulness (Jdg 4:1-2a). When the people call to Him, He delivers them from this enemy by Barak and Deborah. Deborah sings with Barak of that deliverance in a song (Jdg 5:1). In that song she mentions the downfall of this enemy (Jdg 5:19-21). In Psalm 83 God is called up to do to the great northern collection of armies in the last days what He did with this king (Psa 83:9).

Not all cities are burned. God has promised His people that they will live in cities which they themselves have not built (Deu 6:10-11). Not everything should be destroyed. Things that are of use to them must be spared (Deu 20:19-20). But all inhabitants are killed, according to the commandment of the LORD (Deu 7:1-6; 20:16-18). This total extermination should not come as a surprise, as has happened so often, that a loving God commands it. Whoever accuses God of cruelty does not know Him, nor does he know himself.

The God of the Old Testament is no other God than the God of the New Testament, as if we had a God of love there and a God of revenge here. Of the New Testament God it says: "For our God is a consuming fire" (Heb 12:29), while the God of the Old Testament is also a God of love.

Is it unjust that God should have all these people killed? No. There are several reasons to give that make it clear that God is right to do so:

1. God never judges without warning and sufficient time to take the warning to heart. These Canaanites have had a testimony of God in their midst in Melchizedek (Gen 14:18). So they cannot say that they have never heard of God. They also know what He did for His people in Egypt and after.
2. The meekness of God waited four hundred years, until the iniquity of the Amorites was complete (Gen 15:16). He waits long, but not endlessly. He waited one hundred and twenty years before he let the

flood come (Gen 6:3). He has been waiting in His meekness for almost two thousand years now (2Pet 3:8-9) since man has committed the greatest sin ever by killing His Son. But if the wickedness of the Canaanites goes beyond everything, God can only judge them. They do everything a person can think of and do in sinning. They deserve judgment.

3. They know that God is a Judge. They know what He has done in and with Egypt. But none of the cities behave kindly toward the Israelites (verse 19). That is the result of the hardening of their hearts. That does not undo their guilt. God hardens a heart only if someone has hardened his heart first. Hardening is a judgment from God, after man has refused to submit to God. There is a hardening of the Gentiles (Rom 1:24,26,28), the Jews (Rom 11:25) and the nominal Christians (2Thes 2:11-12).

The example of Rahab and the Gibeonites makes clear that God is unaltered in His desire to save people (Rom 10:13). Rahab and also the Gibeonites speak of the threat, of which all inhabitants of Canaan have heard (Jos 2:9-11; 9:9-10). Yet only they resort to the people of God to escape the judgment, albeit in different ways. There, they both find the salvation against judgment.

God does not destine anyone to hell. It is now still “the acceptable time”, “behold, now is “the day of salvation”” (2Cor 6:2) to escape the judgment of hell. But God does determine the time of the end of that time and that day, while He still makes the call to repentance sound. “Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all [people] everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead” (Acts 17:30-31).

### **Verse 15 | Joshua Has Been Obedient in Everything**

*15 Just as the LORD had commanded Moses his servant, so Moses commanded Joshua, and so Joshua did; he left nothing undone of all that the LORD had commanded Moses.*

At the end of the battle, the writer recalls that victory and blessing are the result of obedience. Joshua did everything as the LORD commanded him by Moses.

### Verses 16-22 | Overview of the Conquests

*16 Thus Joshua took all that land: the hill country and all the Negev, all that land of Goshen, the lowland, the Arabah, the hill country of Israel and its lowland 17 from Mount Halak, that rises toward Seir, even as far as Baal-gad in the valley of Lebanon at the foot of Mount Hermon. And he captured all their kings and struck them down and put them to death. 18 Joshua waged war a long time with all these kings. 19 There was not a city which made peace with the sons of Israel except the Hivites living in Gibeon; they took them all in battle. 20 For it was of the LORD to harden their hearts, to meet Israel in battle in order that he might utterly destroy them, that they might receive no mercy, but that he might destroy them, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. 21 Then Joshua came at that time and cut off the Anakim from the hill country, from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab and from all the hill country of Judah and from all the hill country of Israel. Joshua utterly destroyed them with their cities. 22 There were no Anakim left in the land of the sons of Israel; only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod some remained.*

The “long time” of war (verse 18) is about six to seven years. This can be deducted from the times that Caleb mentions in the review of his life (Jos 14:7,10). With the “long time” that the conquest has taken, what the LORD has said about expelling the enemies has also been fulfilled: “I will not drive them out before you in a single year, that the land may not become desolate and the beasts of the field become too numerous for you. I will drive them out before you little by little, until you become fruitful and take possession of the land” (Exo 23:29-30; cf. Deu 7:22).

Also the Anakim, the giants of whom they were so afraid (Num 13:33), are exterminated (verse 21). Without God we are nothing and we lose to dwarves. With God we can do everything and giants are nothing. Yet there are still a few giants left (verse 22). One of their descendants will be Goliath. We should not see such individuals as little things. If we leave anything of the enemy behind, it will put us in the greatest trouble. The

remaining giants find refuge in some cities of the Philistines, whose influence will soon be felt when the people become unfaithful.

### Verse 23 | The Land Rests From War

*23 So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the LORD had spoken to Moses, and Joshua gave it for an inheritance to Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. Thus the land had rest from war.*

After a long time of war there is peace. The rest here is the result of faithfulness in battle. This mention of rest in the land appears three times in the book:

1. here in connection with Joshua,
2. in Joshua 14 in connection with Caleb (Jos 14:15) and
3. in Joshua 21 in connection with the inheritance of the Levites among the people of Israel (Jos 21:44).

You can only enjoy rest if you act faithfully according to what the LORD has said. If through the unfaithfulness of the people not all enemies are eradicated, the rest appears to be of limited duration.

The conquest of the land is complete. This means that there is no external strength left in a hostile power that can exist before them or form another kingdom. Yet there are still many enemies left. If they remain faithful, those enemies will not have to worry them. That is why rest is dangerous, it can so easily lead to laziness. Then it is forgotten that there are still enemies who keep land in their possession. There is always land to conquer.

Rest is good, but it should not lead to carelessness. It is important “having done everything, to stand firm” (Eph 6:13b). The biggest defeat is often suffered after the biggest victory. Rest is also dangerous for older brothers and sisters. The battle never ends as long as we are still in the body.

Verse 23 concludes the first part of the book, which describes the histories of Joshua’s victories. The next chapter, Joshua 12, is a postscript in which the balance of the previous chapters is, as it were, drawn up. The conquered kings and their territories are listed.

## Joshua 12

### Introduction

Joshua 12 mentions the kings defeated by Joshua and the Israelites. The kings are the captains of the hostile armies. The kings represent the evil powers in the heavenly places. These evil powers are the leaders in the spiritual struggle that is being waged against us and that we must fight. Therefore it says: "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual [forces] of wickedness in the heavenly [places]" (Eph 6:12).

If people want to do us harm, mock us for our faith or lie about us, we should first of all not look at those people, but at those evil powers. Thus the Lord Jesus says to Peter, if he wants to pull Him off the way of obedience to his Father: "Get behind Me, Satan!" (Mt 16:23). Peter lets himself be used as an instrument of satan.

### **Verses 1-6 | The Kings of the Wilderness Side of the Jordan**

*1 Now these are the kings of the land whom the sons of Israel defeated, and whose land they possessed beyond the Jordan toward the sunrise, from the valley of the Arnon as far as Mount Hermon, and all the Arabah to the east: 2 Sihon king of the Amorites, who lived in Heshbon, [and] ruled from Aroer, which is on the edge of the valley of the Arnon, both the middle of the valley and half of Gilead, even as far as the brook Jabbok, the border of the sons of Ammon; 3 and the Arabah as far as the Sea of Chinneroth toward the east, and as far as the sea of the Arabah, [even] the Salt Sea, eastward toward Beth-jeshimoth, and on the south, at the foot of the slopes of Pisgah; 4 and the territory of Og king of Bashan, one of the remnant of Rephaim, who lived at Ashtaroth and at Edrei, 5 and ruled over Mount Hermon and Salecah and all Bashan, as far as the border of the Geshurites and the Maacathites, and half of Gilead, [as far as] the border of Sihon king of Heshbon. 6 Moses the servant of the LORD and the sons of Israel defeated them; and Moses the servant of the LORD gave it to the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh as a possession.*



The Holy Spirit not only gives us the victory over our enemies, from whom a list is given here, but also teaches us to know and understand the whole vastness of the land. We learn the distinction between what God gives and the enjoyment of it. After the battle we learn to know the extent and value of the blessings. During the battle, the Christian is not busy with a list of his victories. He must be busy with his purpose. But when the battle has been fought, he may look back to measure the vastness of the grace of God that has worked for him.

For encouragement, now comes a list of the conquered kings. This summing-up begins with the defeating of Sihon and Og. The total number of kings, thirty-one (verse 24), does not include them. These two kings have ruled over territories that are not in the land; they are territories for which one did not have to go through the Jordan.

Yet these kings have been defeated (Num 21:21-35) and their territories conquered and referred to as possessions (verse 6). They speak of our earthly blessings, not of our heavenly blessings. We should not despise them, they are a blessing, but they are not specifically Christian. Believers share earthly blessings with the people of the world. We can think of things like health, children, work. The distinction between the world and the believer is that the world does not thank God for it, while the believer does.

We can possess and enjoy earthly blessings in three ways:

1. as they are enjoyed in the kingdom of peace,
2. like Sihon and Og enjoy them and
3. like Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh enjoy them.

In Ezekiel 48 it is written how the people possess the wilderness side of the Jordan in the kingdom of peace. There the land is divided from north to south in strips and each tribe gets one strip. Each tribe gets a large part in the land and a small part in the wilderness side of the Jordan. As far as we are concerned, God wants us not to possess most of our blessings in the land, but to possess all our blessings in the land.

Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh represent Christians to whom the earthly victories suffice. All the blessing for them consists of the earthly blessings. They don't think of the heavenly ones. The two and a half tribes have no part in the land. Unfortunately, this applies to many Christians.

They rejoice about the earthly blessings. They thank warmly for their food and drink and prosperity, and that is good. However, they do not know their true blessings and do not thank God for them, which is a pity, because God desires precisely that.

Unlike the two and a half tribes, Sihon and Og have done everything only for themselves, in pride. With them there is no thought of God, no feeling of gratitude. Why should they? They considered their possessions as the result or merit of their own effort. Why should you thank God for what you have earned yourself?

### Verses 7-24 | The Kings of the Land

*7 Now these are the kings of the land whom Joshua and the sons of Israel defeated beyond the Jordan toward the west, from Baal-gad in the valley of Lebanon even as far as Mount Halak, which rises toward Seir; and Joshua gave it to the tribes of Israel as a possession according to their divisions, 8 in the hill country, in the lowland, in the Arabah, on the slopes, and in the wilderness, and in the Negev; the Hittite, the Amorite and the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite: 9 the king of Jericho, one; the king of Ai, which is beside Bethel, one; 10 the king of Jerusalem, one; the king of Hebron, one; 11 the king of Jarmuth, one; the king of Lachish, one; 12 the king of Eglon, one; the king of Gezer, one; 13 the king of Debir, one; the king of Geder, one; 14 the king of Hormah, one; the king of Arad, one; 15 the king of Libnah, one; the king of Adullam, one; 16 the king of Makkedah, one; the king of Bethel, one; 17 the king of Tappuah, one; the king of Hepher, one; 18 the king of Aphek, one; the king of Lasharon, one; 19 the king of Madon, one; the king of Hazor, one; 20 the king of Shimron-meron, one; the king of Achshaph, one; 21 the king of Taanach, one; the king of Megiddo, one; 22 the king of Kedesh, one; the king of Jokneam in Carmel, one; 23 the king of Dor in the heights of Dor, one; the king of Goyim in Gilgal, one; 24 the king of Tirzah, one: in all, thirty-one kings.*

It is said of the two and a half tribes that they have got their inheritance from Moses (verse 6). The nine and a half tribes get their property from Joshua. Each tribe has its own task, whereby one complements the other.

It is encouraging that the LORD Himself gives this list. It shows that He does not forget any victory we have achieved in His power. Each individ-

ual victory is noted, as we see in the recurring “one”. It should encourage us to fight “the good fight” (2Tim 4:7), so that we will receive the reward of every victory (Rev 2:7,11,17,26; 3:5,12,21).

The list shows how good God is to Israel by giving them the victory over all these kings and the possession of all their kingdoms. God “gave them also the lands of the nations, that they might take possession of [the fruit of] the peoples’ labor, so that they might keep His statutes and observe His laws, praise the LORD! (Psa 105:44-45). These thirty-one kingdoms will be divided among nine and a half tribes.

First the sixteen kings in the south of Canaan are mentioned (verses 9-16), then the fifteen kings in the north of Canaan. In the previous chapters (Joshua 6-10), the conquest of the cities mentioned here (verses 9-13) is described in detail. It indicates the nature of the battle. By the enumeration here we see the enmity that has housed in every kingdom.

The defeat of all the kings is reason to sing the praises about the lovingkindness of the LORD in Psalm 136:

*“To Him who smote great kings,  
For His lovingkindness is everlasting,  
And slew mighty kings,  
For His lovingkindness is everlasting:  
Sihon, king of the Amorites,  
For His lovingkindness is everlasting,  
And Og, king of Bashan,  
For His lovingkindness is everlasting” (Psa 136:17-20).*

We read further in Psalm 136 that there were great and mighty kings among them. The greater and more violent the hostile king, the greater is the proof of God’s lovingkindness in defeating and killing that king. The land of the conquered kings He has given His people as inheritance. That too is reason to sing the praise of the LORD’s lovingkindness:

*“And gave their land as a heritage,  
For His lovingkindness is everlasting,  
Even a heritage to Israel His servant,  
For His lovingkindness is everlasting” (Psa 136:21-22).*

## Joshua 13

### Introduction

The enemy's main power is broken. Joshua has taken the whole the land (Jos 11:23). From Joshua 13 onward, the tribes, starting with the two and a half tribes on the other side of the Jordan, are each apportioned their own inheritance. They have to take possession of it themselves.

Through the work of the Lord Jesus, the Christian has been given earthly blessings and all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places. Yet there is a distinction in enjoying that blessing. Every Christian must take personal care to enjoy it. This can only happen by really experiencing the relationship with the Lord Jesus, by reading the Bible personally and prayerful.

This chapter is the beginning of the second part of the book, which deals with the division of the land. It is a most important moment in the history of this young nation. After centuries of Egyptian slavery, after decades of wandering in a wild wilderness and after years of heavy fighting, the moment has now come when the Israelites will get their home. They can now work the land, build families and live in peace in their own land, enjoying the fruit that the land produces.

In Joshua 1-12 we saw the entry into the land and its conquest. Joshua 13 is about the division, the apportioning of the land. When it comes to classification, God shows us the size it has in His eyes. That does not mean that it has all already been taken into possession. God speaks about it according to His purpose.

Joshua 13 is the general introduction to the possession of one's own inheritance by each tribe individually. First there is a reference to what remains to be possessed (Jos 13:1) and then to the apportioning (Jos 13:7). When we take possession of it, we can count on God's power. What must be taken possession of is determined by lot. Taking possession and dividing are two things.

The part that each tribe gets differs from each other tribe. So no two believers are equal. Every believer has his own character, gifts, possessions. The same applies to local churches. No two of them are equal. Nobody has ev-

everything, nobody has a total property. Every servant has his one-sidedness and each needs the other as a complement.

In the apportioning God shows the great scope of His blessings. But that is something else than to take possession of it. Taking possession of the land as a whole they did together. After the apportioning, everyone must take possession of what God has entrusted him, because there are still enemies living there.

### Verses 1-7 | Land Still to Be Possessed

*1 Now Joshua was old [and] advanced in years when the LORD said to him, "You are old [and] advanced in years, and very much of the land remains to be possessed. 2 This is the land that remains: all the regions [of] the Philistines and all [those of] the Geshurites; 3 from the Shihor which is east of Egypt, even as far as the border of Ekron to the north (it is counted as Canaanite); the five lords of the Philistines: the Gazite, the Ashdodite, the Ashkelonite, the Gittite, the Ekronite; and the Avvite 4 to the south, all the land of the Canaanite, and Mearah that belongs to the Sidonians, as far as Aphek, to the border of the Amorite; 5 and the land of the Gebalite, and all of Lebanon, toward the east, from Baal-gad below Mount Hermon as far as Lebo-hamath. 6 All the inhabitants of the hill country from Lebanon as far as Misrephoth-maim, all the Sidonians, I will drive them out from before the sons of Israel; only allot it to Israel for an inheritance as I have commanded you. 7 Now therefore, apportion this land for an inheritance to the nine tribes and the half-tribe of Manasseh."*

God must tell Joshua that still "very much of the land remains" that must be taken into possession. Is he also sunk into rest? We no longer taste the atmosphere of spiritual energy to continue conquering. Eventually also Joshua did not bring the people into the promised peace (Heb 4:8). The people will only be brought into the true peace by the Lord Jesus, of whom Joshua is often a picture, but not a perfect picture.

God gives a description of what remains to be conquered. He wants them to see the value of those regions, what they can produce. In this way He wants to make them willing to fight again.

We also need this encouragement regularly. To make us willing to continue the battle, God shows us the glory of heavenly blessings. He encourages

us by saying that He will drive out the enemies, even though the blessings have already been given us as inheritance (verse 6a).

Conquering the land means that it is still in the hands of the enemy. In practical application, this means that we must drive out powers from our lives that still have 'land', so that we cannot yet enjoy certain blessings. The enjoyment of the land is linked to taking possession of it. Taking possession of them can only be done by chasing away the enemy.

The enemies that still are present include the Philistines. They did not go through the Red Sea and the Jordan. They came into the land by the easy way. In them we have a picture of the nominal Christians, people who have a confession, but no new life. These people claim the land for themselves. We have to remove everything the Philistines speak of from our lives. There are also Canaanites in the land that need to be driven out. They have always lived in the land. They are a picture of the people of this world who want to prevent us from taking possession of the land.

God's promise is that He will drive out these enemies from before His people (verse 6). Always the people must take the initiative and then God helps. We must have the desire to drive the enemy out of our lives. When we see the promise of God that He will give us all the blessings of heaven to fully enjoy at the end of the battle, that is a great exhortation to cleanse the land that is not yet subject from enemies.

The lot is the way God reveals His will to give Israel the land for an inheritance (verse 6b; Pro 16:33). The casting of lots is the way God divides the land among His people. Each of us has his own possession in the land, his own enjoyment of the blessing. No one has the same enjoyment of the blessing as any other.

### **Verses 8-13 | Land to Be Divided Beyond the Jordan**

*8 With the other half-tribe, the Reubenites and the Gadites received their inheritance which Moses gave them beyond the Jordan to the east, just as Moses the servant of the LORD gave to them; 9 from Aroer, which is on the edge of the valley of the Arnon, with the city which is in the middle of the valley, and all the plain of Medeba, as far as Dibon; 10 and all the cities of Sihon king of the Amorites, who reigned in Heshbon, as far as the border of the sons of*

*Ammon; 11 and Gilead, and the territory of the Geshurites and Maacathites, and all Mount Hermon, and all Bashan as far as Salecah; 12 all the kingdom of Og in Bashan, who reigned in Ashtaroth and in Edrei (he alone was left of the remnant of the Rephaim); for Moses struck them and dispossessed them. 13 But the sons of Israel did not dispossess the Geshurites or the Maacathites; for Geshur and Maacath live among Israel until this day.*

The division of the wilderness side of the Jordan is done by Moses (verse 8). The conquest of the land to be divided in the other side of the Jordan is attributed to Moses (verse 12). But just like in the land also in the wilderness side of the Jordan all enemies have not been driven out (verse 13). This is not because of Moses, but because of the unfaithfulness of the people. The power of faith of Moses is not shared by the people.

#### **Verse 14 | The Inheritance of Levi**

*14 Only to the tribe of Levi he did not give an inheritance; the offerings by fire to the LORD, the God of Israel, are their inheritance, as He spoke to him.*

The Levites, to which we must also count the priests, have no inheritance. They are connected with the sacrificial service. They receive a threefold inheritance:

1. the offerings by fire,
2. the LORD Himself (verse 33) and
3. the priesthood (Jos 18:7).

It points to the distinction between the blessing and Him Who gives the blessing. With Levi not the inheritance is in the foreground, but the LORD, the Giver of the inheritance.

#### **Verses 15-23 | The Inheritance of Reuben**

*15 So Moses gave [an inheritance] to the tribe of the sons of Reuben according to their families. 16 Their territory was from Aroer, which is on the edge of the valley of the Arnon, with the city which is in the middle of the valley and all the plain by Medeba; 17 Heshbon, and all its cities which are on the plain: Dibon and Bamoth-baal and Beth-baal-meon, 18 and Jahaz and Kedemoth and Mephaath, 19 and Kiriathaim and Sibmah and Zereth-shahar on the hill of the valley, 20 and Beth-peor and the slopes of Pisgah and Beth-jeshimoth, 21 even*

*all the cities of the plain and all the kingdom of Sihon king of the Amorites who reigned in Heshbon, whom Moses struck with the chiefs of Midian, Evi and Rekem and Zur and Hur and Reba, the princes of Sihon, who lived in the land. 22 The sons of Israel also killed Balaam the son of Beor, the diviner, with the sword among [the rest of] their slain. 23 The border of the sons of Reuben was the Jordan. This was the inheritance of the sons of Reuben according to their families, the cities and their villages.*

In conquering the part that Reuben received as inheritance, the Israelites killed Balaam. It seems this was Moses' last act of war before his death (Num 31:1-2,8). The memory of this deed must be a penetrating warning for the Reubenites to guard themselves against the evil that Balaam managed to do in Israel (Num 25:1-3; 31:16). For us, it means a call to live a holy life in body and spirit: "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2Cor 7:1).

#### **Verses 24-28 | The Inheritance of Gad**

*24 Moses also gave [an inheritance] to the tribe of Gad, to the sons of Gad, according to their families. 25 Their territory was Jazer, and all the cities of Gilead, and half the land of the sons of Ammon, as far as Aroer which is before Rabbah; 26 and from Heshbon as far as Ramath-mizpeh and Betonim, and from Mahanaim as far as the border of Debir; 27 and in the valley, Beth-haram and Beth-nimrah and Succoth and Zaphon, the rest of the kingdom of Sihon king of Heshbon, with the Jordan as a border, as far as the [lower] end of the Sea of Chinnereth beyond the Jordan to the east. 28 This is the inheritance of the sons of Gad according to their families, the cities and their villages.*

Ramoth, in the inheritance of Gad, seems to have been the first city to fall back into the hands of the enemies of God's people (1Kgs 22:3). It is a harbinger of the deportation of the two and a half tribes in its entirety by the Assyrians who were later used by God as a disciplinary rod for His people.

#### **Verses 29-31 | The Inheritance of the Half-Tribe of Manasseh**

*29 Moses also gave [an inheritance] to the half-tribe of Manasseh; and it was for the half-tribe of the sons of Manasseh according to their families. 30*



*Their territory was from Mahanaim, all Bashan, all the kingdom of Og king of Bashan, and all the towns of Jair, which are in Bashan, sixty cities; 31 also half of Gilead, with Ashtaroth and Edrei, the cities of the kingdom of Og in Bashan, [were] for the sons of Machir the son of Manasseh, for half of the sons of Machir according to their families.*

The inheritance of the half-tribe of Manasseh contains the kingdom of Og, famous for the best wood, that of the oak trees of Bashan. This tribe lies north of Gad, reaches up to Mount Hermon, and encloses part of Gilead. With this half-tribe of Manasseh are well known names connected. Thus, Mizpah lies in the territory of this half tribe. From there come two judges, "Jair the Gileadite" (Jdg 10:3) and "Jephthah the Gileadite" (Jdg 11:1), as well as the famous prophet "Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the settlers of Gilead" (1Kgs 17:1).

The two and a half tribes did not look beyond their needs when applying for the wilderness side of the Jordan as inheritance. They have a lot of cattle, the land has a lot of pasture land, the conclusion is quickly drawn. They have been guided in their choice by their eyes (cf. Gen 13:10-11). But besides the fact that they have shown a certain disdain for the actual inheritance of the LORD for His people, they also have no eye for the vulnerable position they have chosen. Their land has no natural boundaries. They form a grateful object for hostile peoples. As said, they are also the first to be taken away by the Assyrians and scattered in the countries over which the king of Assyria reigns (1Chr 5:26). Till this day they have not yet returned to their territory.

### **Verse 32 | Conclusion**

*32 These are [the territories] which Moses apportioned for an inheritance in the plains of Moab, beyond the Jordan at Jericho to the east.*

This verse establishes that the apportioning of the territories on the wilderness side of the Jordan to the two-and-a-half tribe was done by Moses.

### **Verse 33 | The LORD Himself Is the Inheritance of Levi**

*33 But to the tribe of Levi, Moses did not give an inheritance; the LORD, the God of Israel, is their inheritance, as He had promised to them.*

What the two and a half tribes have been given, forms a great contrast with the portion of the Levites. The LORD Himself is the inheritance of Levi: "Therefore, Levi does not have a portion or inheritance with his brothers; the LORD is his inheritance, just as the LORD your God spoke to him" (Deu 10:9; 18:2). This inheritance is not given to them by Moses, but they receive it according to the promise from the LORD Himself.

# Joshua 14

## Introduction

Caleb reminds Joshua of what the LORD said to Moses. As a reward for his faithfulness he would receive Hebron as inheritance. The name Hebron has a wonderful meaning, namely 'fellowship'. Fellowship means that someone shares with another something that is important to both. This name expresses the greatest blessing we can imagine.

In 1 John 1 it says: "Our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1Jn 1:3b). This means that we speak with the Father about the Son and speak with the Son about the Father. The better we get to know the Father and the Son, the more we will enjoy it. This fellowship gives "complete joy" (1Jn 1:4). If we are faithful, this will be our part.

In Joshua 14 the apportioning of the actual land begins, an apportioning that is communicated to us until Joshua 19. This is not a dry list. The apportioning of the land and the description of what each gets are a picture of certain spiritual exercises that take place and that are related to the spiritual mind.

First, by lot, the inheritance is apportioned to two and a half tribes in the land Canaan: Judah (Joshua 14-15) and then to the two sons of Joseph with an inheritance for Ephraim (Joshua 16) and an inheritance for the other half-tribe of Manasseh (Joshua 17). This apportioning takes place in Gilgal. The other seven tribes (Benjamin, Simeon, Zebulun, Issachar, Asher, Naphtali and Dan) are apportioned their inheritance in Shiloh (Joshua 18-19). The apportioning to the tribes is preceded, to our teaching and encouragement, by the splendid example of Caleb.

## **Verses 1-5 | Who Divides the Land; the Method of Dividing**

*1 Now these are [the territories] which the sons of Israel inherited in the land of Canaan, which Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the households of the tribes of the sons of Israel apportioned to them for an inheritance, 2 by the lot of their inheritance, as the LORD commanded through Moses, for the nine tribes and the half-tribe. 3 For Moses had given the inheri-*

*tance of the two tribes and the half-tribe beyond the Jordan; but he did not give an inheritance to the Levites among them. 4 For the sons of Joseph were two tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim, and they did not give a portion to the Levites in the land, except cities to live in, with their pasture lands for their livestock and for their property. 5 Thus the sons of Israel did just as the LORD had commanded Moses, and they divided the land.*

Apportioning the inheritance to the tribes is done by Eleazar, Joshua and the households of the tribes of the sons of Israel. It is remarkable that Eleazar is mentioned first, that is before Joshua. Both are a picture of the Lord Jesus. Joshua is a picture of the guidance of the Spirit. Eleazar is the high priest in the land, as Aaron had been during the wilderness journey. Aaron is related to weaknesses and temptations. Eleazar is a picture of the Lord Jesus Who helps us to enter the land, that is, to take possession of the spiritual blessings.

The Lord Jesus knows all the obstacles to taking possession of the heavenly blessing. Therefore we need Him as our High Priest to know our blessings and therefore Eleazar is mentioned first as a picture of Him here. Our blessings are all connected with the Lord Jesus glorified in heaven. It is about Him, and the blessing is that we get to know Him better.

All truth is connected with Him: the whole truth, for example, of eternal life, the Father's house, fellowship with the triune God, the church connected with Him in heaven, as body, as house, as bride, as children and sons of God, that we are heirs, the new man, the new creation. All these truths lie outside the old creation. All these blessings can only be conquered by prayerful struggle on the knees, by hard and persistent struggles.

The names of the heads of the households are given in Numbers 34 (Num 34:16-29). Their presence and supervision at the distribution will ensure that any suspicion of favoring any tribe will have no chance. Each tribe will be able to be satisfied with the inheritance assigned to him. The heads of the households represent responsible brethren who help the members of God's people in a local church to take possession of their inheritances – the spiritual blessings in the heavenly places. Through their teaching from Scripture they present the truths that are connected with the Lord Jesus.

## Verses 6-12 | Caleb Asks for What Is Promised to Him

6 Then the sons of Judah drew near to Joshua in Gilgal, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him, "You know the word which the LORD spoke to Moses the man of God concerning you and me in Kadesh-barnea. 7 I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadesh-barnea to spy out the land, and I brought word back to him as [it was] in my heart. 8 Nevertheless my brethren who went up with me made the heart of the people melt with fear; but I followed the LORD my God fully. 9 So Moses swore on that day, saying, 'Surely the land on which your foot has trodden will be an inheritance to you and to your children forever, because you have followed the LORD my God fully.' 10 Now behold, the LORD has let me live, just as He spoke, these forty-five years, from the time that the LORD spoke this word to Moses, when Israel walked in the wilderness; and now behold, I am eighty-five years old today. 11 I am still as strong today as I was in the day Moses sent me; as my strength was then, so my strength is now, for war and for going out and coming in. 12 Now then, give me this hill country about which the LORD spoke on that day, for you heard on that day that Anakim [were] there, with great fortified cities; perhaps the LORD will be with me, and I will drive them out as the LORD has spoken."

The first to report to take possession of their part of the land are the Judeans. Yet we do not hear of the desire of the whole tribe, but of only one man. Often it is only one in a family or a few in the local church. But this can also make others enthusiastic. As one of the heads of the households (verse 1) Caleb not only supervises a fair distribution, but also asks for an inheritance for himself.

It is understandable that Caleb comes first. He has been looking forward to this moment for forty-five years. He is now eighty-five. His enthusiasm has remained unabated. The hope of the fulfilment of what has been promised to him has given him strength to experience the wilderness journey without complaining. He is an example that expecting the Lord, and of what He has promised, gives strength for the walk (Isa 40:31).

His strength does not lie in past victories. He doesn't lean on passed glory, by telling impressive stories from a long time ago. No, Caleb is still full of energy to achieve new victories of faith. He is still as strong as he was then.

When one grows old it is not necessary that the spiritual strength diminishes. On the contrary. The testimony that Caleb gives to Joshua is not only about the past, but also and especially about now.

He is a Kenizzite. In Genesis 15 the Kenizzite are mentioned as a tribe living in Canaan (Gen 15:19). But it is also possible that it is the indication of a family in Judah. His ancestors have presumably entered in among the people of God. And precisely this man is such a great example. Many who did not grow up in the midst of God's people often show a greater desire for spiritual blessing than those who grew up in among them. This can embarrass us. Caleb is still called the Kenizzite.

Caleb first reminds Joshua of the word the LORD has spoken to Moses about him (verse 7). Then he recalls that Moses, in accordance with what the LORD has said, has promised him an inheritance as a reward for his faithfulness (verse 9; Deu 1:36). For Caleb, all these are not empty words. He is now going to claim what has been promised to him. This is language to the heart of the LORD.

Caleb means 'wholeheartedly'. That's how he did everything and that's how he still does it. Nor should we be lukewarm Christians. He recounts how he did it, forty-five years ago, when he was sent out to spy out the land and his co-spies had melted the hearts of the people. He has remained dedicated to his mission with all his heart (verse 8). Moses has confirmed that he has followed the LORD fully (verse 9). That dedication is still there when he stands here before Joshua. Because of this dedication he receives Hebron (verse 14).

Caleb is mentioned many times together with Joshua. All those who are so dedicated are also always united with the true Joshua, the Lord Jesus, and mentioned in one breath with Him. Joshua is also a picture of the leader. The connection between Joshua and Caleb also shows the combination of dedicated leadership in the church. Leader of the people is he who has taken possession of the blessings through battle and lives in heavenly things. It is not a question of a strong personality, of reasoning talent or organizational ability, but of dedication to and connectedness with the Lord Jesus.

Caleb has perseverance. He has seen many people fall in the wilderness. All of his age have died. He is an exception, together with Joshua. He is

now an old man, but not tired of days. It will not always have been easy for him to wait, but he has lived by the word the LORD has spoken. God's Word has worked in him perseverance and the confidence that God is working in behalf of him (Isa 64:4). Now he still has to persevere because he doesn't have it yet. He has yet to conquer it. But he confidently declares that he will succeed.

He wants the territory with giants and fortified cities. He sees the reality, it is not proudness. But he counts on the faithfulness of the LORD. In modesty, he speaks of "perhaps" (verse 12). He does not count on his own strength, however strong he feels, but on the LORD. But if the LORD is with him, there is no doubt whatsoever about the outcome with him.

Caleb is not haughty. Pride is a danger that increases as the years go by. The warning "for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world" (1Jn 2:16) is addressed to young men in faith. But although these three dangers are especially true for the young men, a broader application is certainly permitted.

It is dangerous to say that others have nothing to do with what is special for a particular stage of growth. Fathers and children in faith should also take to heart the warning to the young men. In connection with the phases of spiritual growth which John speaks about in his first letter – little children, young men and fathers (1Jn 2:12-18) – we can say the following: for the little children of faith, "the desire of the flesh" is particularly dangerous, for the young men, it is "the desire of the eyes", and for the fathers in Christ, the adult believers, it is the "pride of life".

### Verses 13-15 | Caleb Gets Hebron

*13 So Joshua blessed him and gave Hebron to Caleb the son of Jephunneh for an inheritance. 14 Therefore, Hebron became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite until this day, because he followed the LORD God of Israel fully. 15 Now the name of Hebron was formerly Kiriath-arba; [for Arba] was the greatest man among the Anakim. Then the land had rest from war.*

As always we see the complete unity between what Moses has said and what Joshua does. Joshua acts entirely according to what the LORD and

Moses have said, and gives Hebron to Caleb as an inheritance. The origin of Hebron is strongly linked to death. There Sarah dies and there Abraham buries her (Gen 23:2,19). It is the place that reminds us of the end of man. It is the city of death, the grave is there. Caleb is constantly reminded of this. Whatever giant there is (Arba = giant), it finds its end there.

But there is also the memory of a new man who lives in fellowship with the Lord Jesus – as said, Hebron means ‘fellowship’. Joseph was sent by his father from Hebron to seek his brothers (Gen 37:14). Thus the Lord Jesus was sent from the fellowship with the Father to the world. In Hebron David was crowned king by all the tribes of Israel (2Sam 5:3). There is also fellowship between the people of God and the Lord Jesus. Joseph and David are both a picture of the Lord Jesus.

In connection to Caleb’s request and the language of faith it shows, the chapter ends with the statement that the land had rest from war. Here the peace in the land is connected with the works of Caleb’s faith. This indicates that trusting the Lord, that He enables us to take possession of our blessings, gives rest.



# Joshua 15

## Introduction

At first sight, the listing of the names of borders and cities does not seem to give much food for the heart. But “all Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness” (2Tim 3:16). When we read through such lists of names, we often find something in between that affects us. This chapter suddenly contains the history of Caleb and his daughter (verses 13-19).

Caleb’s daughter shows the same faith as her father. Two things are said of her. First, she encourages her husband to ask her father for a piece of land. Secondly, she also asks for a blessing herself. Women take a different place in the Bible than men, but not a lesser one. They can stimulate their husbands in being busy with the blessings of heaven and they themselves can enjoy them as well.

## **Verses 1-4 | The South Border**

*1 Now the lot for the tribe of the sons of Judah according to their families reached the border of Edom, southward to the wilderness of Zin at the extreme south. 2 Their south border was from the lower end of the Salt Sea, from the bay that turns to the south. 3 Then it proceeded southward to the ascent of Akkrabbim and continued to Zin, then went up by the south of Kadesh-barnea and continued to Hezron, and went up to Addar and turned about to Karka. 4 It continued to Azmon and proceeded to the brook of Egypt, and the border ended at the sea. This shall be your south border.*

The LORD makes it clear by lot which part of the land will belong to Judah. In Acts 1 we read for the last time in Scripture about the use of the lot to know the will of the Lord (Acts 1:26). In Acts 2 the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in the church. From that moment on He leads God’s children “into all the truth” (Jn 16:13).

Judah gets the southern part of the land, from the wilderness to the mountain on which Jerusalem lies. The southern border separates the land of Canaan from other peoples, including Edom and Egypt.

### Verses 5-12 | East Border, North Border and West Border

5 The east border [was] the Salt Sea, as far as the mouth of the Jordan. And the border of the north side was from the bay of the sea at the mouth of the Jordan. 6 Then the border went up to Beth-hoglah, and continued on the north of Beth-arabah, and the border went up to the stone of Bohan the son of Reuben. 7 The border went up to Debir from the valley of Achor, and turned northward toward Gilgal which is opposite the ascent of Adummim, which is on the south of the valley; and the border continued to the waters of En-shemesh and it ended at En-rogel. 8 Then the border went up the valley of Ben-hinnom to the slope of the Jebusite on the south (that is, Jerusalem); and the border went up to the top of the mountain which is before the valley of Hinnom to the west, which is at the end of the valley of Rephaim toward the north. 9 From the top of the mountain the border curved to the spring of the waters of Nephtoah and proceeded to the cities of Mount Ephron, then the border curved to Baalah (that is, Kiriath-jearim). 10 The border turned about from Baalah westward to Mount Seir, and continued to the slope of Mount Jearim on the north (that is, Chesalon), and went down to Beth-shemesh and continued through Timnah. 11 The border proceeded to the side of Ekron northward. Then the border curved to Shikkeron and continued to Mount Baalah and proceeded to Jabneel, and the border ended at the sea. 12 The west border [was] at the Great Sea, even [its] coastline. This is the border around the sons of Judah according to their families.

The description of the east border and the west border of Judah is simple. These borders are indicated by two waters: ‘the Salt Sea’, or the Dead Sea, ‘as far as the mouth of the Jordan River’ in the east (verse 5a) and ‘the Great Sea’, or the Mediterranean Sea, in the west (verse 12a). The north border is described in detail (verses 5b-11) because it delimits Judah’s territory from the other tribes.

### Verses 13-14 | Caleb Gets and Conquers His Inheritance

13 Now he gave to Caleb the son of Jephunneh a portion among the sons of Judah, according to the command of the LORD to Joshua, [namely], Kiriath-arba, [Arba being] the father of Anak (that is, Hebron). 14 Caleb drove out from there the three sons of Anak: Sheshai and Ahiman and Talmi, the children of Anak.

Here we read that Caleb really takes possession of his inheritance. He has got it and driven out the enemies. Caleb knows these children of Anak from the past. All Israelites who have been afraid of them (Num 13:33) have died.

Anak means 'long-necked' or 'giant'. In him we can see a picture of satan. His three sons are together a picture of all that is in the world and is in rebellion against God. Sheshai means 'free', Ahiman means 'brother of the gift', Talmi means 'audacious'.

In connection with these names and "all that is in the world" (1Jn 2:16) the following application can be made. It is the desire of the flesh to be free, to do what you want. In addition, one is guided by the desire of the eyes to possess what is presented as 'a gift'. Finally man is so audacious that he takes in the pride of life what the devil offers him.

These giants do not impress Caleb because he compares them to the power of God. He is now eighty-five years old, but still as fearless to take possession of the land as when he had just spied it out. The giants have not become smaller in the course of time, but neither has the faith of Caleb in the power of God.

Even old believers can fight the battle. Unfortunately, it may be possible that in the course of Christian life, old habits have crept in that form an obstacle to this battle. But if there is faith in the power of God, even in old age giants can still be expelled and blessings taken into possession.

### Verses 15-19 | Caleb, Othniel and Achsah

*15 Then he went up from there against the inhabitants of Debir; now the name of Debir formerly was Kiriath-sepher. 16 And Caleb said, "The one who attacks Kiriath-sepher and captures it, I will give him Achsah my daughter as a wife." 17 Othniel the son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb, captured it; so he gave him Achsah his daughter as a wife. 18 It came about that when she came [to him], she persuaded him to ask her father for a field. So she alighted from the donkey, and Caleb said to her, "What do you want?" 19 Then she said, "Give me a blessing; since you have given me the land of the Negev, give me also springs of water." So he gave her the upper springs and the lower springs.*

Kiriath-sepher means 'city of the book'. It will have been a city of scholarship and literature of the Canaanites. Young people sometimes have to deal with books of the world, with modern literature, which defiles the mind. Then spiritual strength is needed to take and eradicate this stronghold so it will not harm the soul.

It is possible to confront in spiritual power. Parents have a responsibility in this. They need to know what their children need to take in. They don't have to read such literature themselves, but as Caleb they can offer a reward, a stimulus to overcome in the strength of faith. Parents have a duty to help their children capture that city.

Othniel will not only be inspired by the reward. He himself must have been longing for the land. He will have often heard Uncle Caleb talk about it and seen in his uncle's life what it means to him. This preparation, together with the victory he gets and the woman he gets, makes him ready to be the first judge (Jdg 3:9).

The city is captured by Othniel, a young man. His name means 'lion of God' or 'my power is God'. Young people often have to deal with 'the city of the book', which is the wisdom of the world. If that city is overcome in spiritual power of faith, the city is renamed Debir, which means 'place of demand'. This reminds us of the most holy place, the place where God speaks to the high priest and to the people. Debir can also mean 'a word of God'. Both meanings point to the speaking of God to our hearts.

It is to be desired that all old believers want to be like Caleb who has taken Kiriath-arba, which means 'city of giants', to make Hebron, that means 'fellowship', out of it. It is to be desired that all young believers want to be like Othniel who takes 'the city of the book' to make it 'a word of God'.

Caleb knows how to encourage young people to fight. He promises the conqueror of Kiriath-sepher his daughter. Othniel seizes that opportunity. Achsah will not only have been attractive to him externally. He will have known her interest in the land, for she shows this.

Caleb also has sons (1Chr 4:15a). They will also have received their portion. But the blessings of the land and taking possession of them is not only for brothers. May the Lord give that there are women like Achsah, who are interested in the inheritance of God and ask for a portion.

Achsah's interest in the land is first expressed by her stimulating her husband Othniel to ask her father for a field. Women who stimulate their husbands in this way are a real help. Such women are not interested in their husbands taking a prominent position in the church. Such women want that their husbands will achieve spiritual victories.

It will have been a joy for Caleb to comply with Othniel's request. He gives him a field. Achsah sees that something is missing in the inheritance. Not only does she want to have a land, but she also wants to enjoy fruit from the inheritance. We can point at the amount of bible comments that we have received or purchased or that we know to find on the Internet. But if we don't want to use those comments to bear fruit, we only own dry land.

Four times in one verse there is talk of 'give' (verse 19). Achsah knows her father as a giving father. If we know God like this, we will ask Him a lot. It is His joy to give to us, but He desires us to ask Him. He loves to give to those who expect something from Him.

Achsah addresses her father appropriately, not boldly or compellingly. She alights from the donkey. Caleb understands that she wants to ask something. She asks for a wedding gift. The dry land does not yield anything. Water is needed and she asks for it. She will have known that Moses has spoken of a land with an abundance of water, both in the valley and on the hill (Deu 8:7). The water from a spring speaks of the Word of God which is made alive by the Holy Spirit. Upper springs in the mountains make the water flow from top to bottom. Lower springs are in the valleys.

In our lives of faith we are at highlights, but also in valleys. Conferences and personal Bible study can be upper springs, where we are refreshed. But also in the struggles of the life of faith, in the valleys, we need the clear water of the Word to refresh ourselves. Above all, we need the desire of faith of an Achsah to desire such springs.

Often women have a better and greater understanding of what is needed than men. Because they long for it and know how to obtain it, they also get what they long for. Such a one is Mary "who was seated at the Lord's feet, listening to His word" (Lk 10:39). The Lord Jesus says of her: "Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her" (Lk 10:42). One may still be so familiar with the land, but to enjoy fruit requires a desire.

**Verses 20-62 | Cities and Villages in Judah**

20 This is the inheritance of the tribe of the sons of Judah according to their families. 21 Now the cities at the extremity of the tribe of the sons of Judah toward the border of Edom in the south were Kabzeel and Eder and Jagur, 22 and Kinah and Dimonah and Adadah, 23 and Kedesh and Hazor and Ithnan, 24 Ziph and Telem and Bealoth, 25 and Hazor-hadattah and Kerioth-hezron (that is, Hazor), 26 Amam and Shema and Moladah, 27 and Hazar-gaddah and Heshmon and Beth-pelet, 28 and Hazar-shual and Beersheba and Biziothiah, 29 Baalah and Iim and Ezem, 30 and Eltolad and Chesil and Hormah, 31 and Ziklag and Madmannah and Sansannah, 32 and Lebaoth and Shilhim and Ain and Rimmon; in all, twenty-nine cities with their villages. 33 In the lowland: Eshtaol and Zorah and Ashnah, 34 and Zanoah and En-gannim, Tappuah and Enam, 35 Jarmuth and Adullam, Socoh and Azekah, 36 and Shaaraim and Adithaim and Gederah and Gederothaim; fourteen cities with their villages. 37 Zenan and Hadashah and Migdal-gad, 38 and Dilean and Mizpeh and Joktheel, 39 Lachish and Bozkath and Eglon, 40 and Cabbon and Lahmas and Chitlish, 41 and Gederoth, Beth-dagon and Naamah and Makkedah; sixteen cities with their villages. 42 Libnah and Ether and Ashan, 43 and Iphtah and Ashnah and Nezib, 44 and Keilah and Achzib and Mareshah; nine cities with their villages. 45 Ekron, with its towns and its villages; 46 from Ekron even to the sea, all that were by the side of Ashdod, with their villages. 47 Ashdod, its towns and its villages; Gaza, its towns and its villages; as far as the brook of Egypt and the Great Sea, even [its] coastline. 48 In the hill country: Shamir and Jattir and Socoh, 49 and Dannah and Kiriath-sannah (that is, Debir), 50 and Anab and Esstemoh and Anim, 51 and Goshen and Holon and Giloh; eleven cities with their villages. 52 Arab and Dumah and Eshan, 53 and Janum and Beth-tappuah and Aphekah, 54 and Humtah and Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron), and Zior; nine cities with their villages. 55 Maon, Carmel and Ziph and Juttah, 56 and Jezreel and Jokdeam and Zanoah, 57 Kain, Gibeah and Timnah; ten cities with their villages. 58 Halhul, Beth-zur and Gedor, 59 and Maarath and Beth-anoth and Eltekon; six cities with their villages. 60 Kiriath-baal (that is, Kiriath-jearim), and Rabbah; two cities with their villages. 61 In the wilderness: Beth-arabah, Middin and Secacah, 62 and Nibshan and the City of Salt and Engedi; six cities with their villages.

Here the towns and villages are named according to the different territories in which they are located. In this way, the inheritance is enjoyed, in these different contexts. A village is not what we understand by it. It is more like a hamlet consisting of one family or two families of which the members live and work together. It speaks of individual believers who share blessings with each other in a smaller context, for example a family context.

A city speaks more of a local church. Every family is different, as is every local church. We notice this when we read the letters to the various churches in the New Testament. Taking possession of the land is not something of the study room, to enjoy those things only for ourselves. It is something we share with our families, fathers, mothers and children or also with the brothers and sisters with whom we form a local church.

If we don't, we will capture the inheritance as Reuben and Gad did. Of these tribes only the men have captured the inheritance. Although, they did not do this for themselves, but for others. Their wives and children have never seen the inheritance. Not sharing with others what we have taken possession of is also visible in Ephraim and Manasseh: there are hardly any villages and towns mentioned of them. Judah really is a tribe after the thoughts of God.

Can each local church be considered a city, in the wilderness or in the mountains? We are all needed to build up each other and complement each other. This happens mainly in the local Bible reading. Can the church where we are be considered a church in the wilderness or in the mountain? Is it a city in the land, i.e. is it a church where the blessings of heaven are enjoyed, either in relation to life on earth or in relation to the position of believers in Christ?

Spiritually speaking, the border of Judah is a curious border. No tribe has a view like Judah. Those who live in the south have the view on Edom (verses 21-32). Edom is a brother nation and at the same time the most hateful enemy. Edom speaks of the flesh in the believer. This limit may not be crossed, that is to say that the flesh may not have the opportunity to enter the inheritance, because that will result in destruction of (the enjoyment of) the inheritance.

Then verses 33-47 mention the cities in the lowland. That is the low part of the land between the sea and the mountains of Judea. The low speaks of the realm of Christian life where heavenly blessings are shown, the practical life of faith of every day. In the letter to the Ephesians, those territories are seen in marriages and families and working environment. Wives and husbands (Eph 5:22-33), children and parents (Eph 6:1-4), slaves and masters are all addressed (Eph 6:5-9).

There are also cities in the hill country (verses 48-60). This relates to knowing the blessings in Christ in the heavenly places. Paul prays for the believers in Ephesus that they will know their blessings (Eph 1:17-21). John is carried away "in the spirit to a great and high mountain" to see the new Jerusalem, that is the church (Rev 21:10). Churches like Ephesus are located "in the hill country". Are there still such churches in professing Christianity today?

Finally, the cities are mentioned in the wilderness of Judea, east of the mountains to the Dead Sea (verses 61-62). Judea is constantly reminded of the wilderness, its aridity. The awareness of all the blessings in heaven also includes the awareness that this world has nothing to offer for faith. In the kingdom of peace, however, the wilderness will blossom profusely "like the crocus" (Isa 35:1). That is what faith looks forward to.

### **Verse 63 | Enemies That Judah Could Not Drive Out**

*63 Now as for the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the sons of Judah could not drive them out; so the Jebusites live with the sons of Judah at Jerusalem until this day.*

However much the Judeans may occupy a special place in God's people, however much there are men and women in Judah like Caleb and Achsah, it is no guarantee for complete faithfulness. As a tribe they lack the strength (faith) to drive the enemy out to the last man.

Every testimony, every family has the responsibility to ensure that every enemy is driven out and that the land is possessed, so that all are satisfied. The history of the church on earth unfortunately shows that the enemy has not been completely eliminated.



## Joshua 16

### Introduction

The tribe of Ephraim and the half-tribe of Manasseh – the sons of Joseph – are allocated their inheritance in the land. They are not satisfied with this (Jos 17:14,16). They want more. Joshua accepts their request and grants them another piece of land. They have to conquer that themselves. They are assured that they will expel the inhabitants (Jos 17:18). But they do not drive out all Canaanites (Jos 16:10; 17:12).

God is also a Giver to us. If we ask Him more of the heavenly land than we already have, He gives it. The blessing of the heavenly land is the glory of the Lord Jesus. How would God ever hold something back from the Lord Jesus when we ask to see more of His glory? We may behold His glory (Jn 1:14). To see more of His glory we have to fight, because all kinds of things want to keep us from it.

The tribe of Joseph is divided into two because the tribe of Levi does not receive any inheritance (Jos 14:3-4). The importance of the tribe of Joseph can be seen in the fact that he gets his share immediately after Judah and also in the size of his inheritance.

Joseph's sons become the ruling tribes in the north of the kingdom, after the division of the kingdom into ten and two tribes has taken place. The dominant position is so clear, that the whole of the ten tribes realm is referred to by several prophets as 'Ephraim'.

Joseph received the birthright, after Reuben had lost it: "Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel (for he was the firstborn, but because he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph the son of Israel; ...)" (1Chr 5:1; Gen 49:4). The next sons of Leah, Simeon and Levi, did not get it either. They are men of violence and are therefore scattered among Israel (Gen 49:5-7). The fourth son, Judah, does not get it either, but becomes the king tribe (Gen 49:8-12). This is why Judah gets his inheritance so early.

The firstborn gets a double part. Jacob accepted the two sons of Joseph as his own sons: “The angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and may my name live on in them, and the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac” (Gen 48:16a). Therefore they can be counted among the tribes. For them together, one lot is cast. They complain about this together (Jos 17:14). By the lot, they stay together, although each tribe gets a share.

### Verses 1-3 | The Lot for the Sons of Joseph

*1 Then the lot for the sons of Joseph went from the Jordan at Jericho to the waters of Jericho on the east into the wilderness, going up from Jericho through the hill country to Bethel. 2 It went from Bethel to Luz, and continued to the border of the Archites at Ataroth. 3 It went down westward to the territory of the Japhletites, as far as the territory of lower Beth-horon even to Gezer, and it ended at the sea.*

As always, the border is first determined and then told what is in the territory. The border is given to draw a sharp distinction between the land and the surroundings that are not part of the inheritance. The south border of Joseph is the north border of Benjamin and Dan. In width, their territory extends over the whole land, from the Jordan to the Mediterranean Sea.

### Verses 4-9 | The Territory of the Ephraimites

*4 The sons of Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim, received their inheritance. 5 Now [this] was the territory of the sons of Ephraim according to their families: the border of their inheritance eastward was Ataroth-addar, as far as upper Beth-horon. 6 Then the border went westward at Michmethath on the north, and the border turned about eastward to Taanath-shiloh and continued [beyond] it to the east of Janoah. 7 It went down from Janoah to Ataroth and to Naarah, then reached Jericho and came out at the Jordan. 8 From Tappuah the border continued westward to the brook of Kanah, and it ended at the sea. This is the inheritance of the tribe of the sons of Ephraim according to their families, 9 [together] with the cities which were set apart for the sons of Ephraim in the midst of the inheritance of the sons of Manasseh, all the cities with their villages.*

In the description of Joseph’s inheritance only a few towns and villages are mentioned. This is in contrast to Judah, of which many cities and villages

are mentioned. The blessings are, so to speak, enjoyed here not so much village-wise or city-wise. They may hardly have conquered cities.

The inheritance is not only a personal matter, but also a matter for families and churches. Each local church has its own gifts and blessings. The letters to the churches in the New Testament show this. Today's churches could be more diligent in realizing that they are 'cities in the land'. Many churches may be content with the blessings of the earth, but know little or nothing about the enjoyment of heavenly blessings in a family or church context.

### **Verse 10 | Not All Enemies Are Driven Out**

*10 But they did not drive out the Canaanites who lived in Gezer, so the Canaanites live in the midst of Ephraim to this day, and they became forced laborers.*

This verse contains a warning. Earlier we read that the Judeans are not able to drive out the enemies (Jos 15:63). Apparently they have tried. The Ephraimites don't even seem to have tried it. Apparently they have the strength for it (Jos 17:13), but are not in the mood. They may quickly have thought themselves rich, are satisfied with it and have become lazy. Spiritual wealth makes us lazy if we receive it without having to fight to conquer it.

Perhaps the Ephraimites have seen gains in using the Canaanites as forced laborers. This allows them to provide themselves with extra wealth. But in the time of the judges, this action will turn against them. The same applies to the life of a Christian who does not want to break with a particular "favorite sin" because this makes life so pleasant. One day he will awaken from the dream and notice that this sin controls his life and leads him to spiritual bankruptcy. Playing with sin always avenges itself.

## Joshua 17

### Verses 1-2 | The Lot for Manasseh

*1 Now [this] was the lot for the tribe of Manasseh, for he was the firstborn of Joseph. To Machir the firstborn of Manasseh, the father of Gilead, were allotted Gilead and Bashan, because he was a man of war. 2 So [the lot] was [made] for the rest of the sons of Manasseh according to their families: for the sons of Abiezer and for the sons of Helek and for the sons of Asriel and for the sons of Shechem and for the sons of Hephher and for the sons of Shemida; these [were] the male descendants of Manasseh the son of Joseph according to their families.*

The “lot” for the tribe of Manasseh, that is the one piece of land, is divided into two pieces: one piece for Ephraim and one piece for Manasseh. Although Manasseh is the first-born (Gen 41:51), first Ephraim, who is counted as the first-born (Gen 48:13-20) received his part of the inheritance. After that Manasseh gets his share of the inheritance. Machir seems to have been the only son of Manasseh (Gen 50:23). The other sons are then in fact those of Machir.

Some of Machir’s sons, together with the tribes of Reuben and Gad, have taken possession of the inheritance in the wilderness side of the Jordan. Reuben and Gad want that land because they have a lot of cattle (Num 32:1,5). Machir may also have a lot of cattle, although that is not mentioned of him. But he must have had a great predilection for that many cattle. In any case, he joins Reuben and Gad. That means a welcome reinforcement for them because he is “a man of war”.

The other sons of Manasseh choose for an inheritance in the land. Gideon belongs to the “sons of Abiëzer” (Jdg 6:11,24,34). Zelophehad’s daughters are descended from Hephher. The ten portions that tribe gets (verse 5) consist of six portions, containing five portions for the five sons, and a sixth portion, that of Hephher, which is divided into five portions for the five daughters of Zelophehad.

### Verses 3-6 | The Daughters of Zelophehad

*3 However, Zelophehad, the son of Hepher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, had no sons, only daughters; and these are the names of his daughters: Mahlah and Noah, Hoglah, Milcah and Tirzah. 4 They came near before Eleazar the priest and before Joshua the son of Nun and before the leaders, saying, "The LORD commanded Moses to give us an inheritance among our brothers." So according to the command of the LORD he gave them an inheritance among their father's brothers. 5 Thus there fell ten portions to Manasseh, besides the land of Gilead and Bashan, which is beyond the Jordan, 6 because the daughters of Manasseh received an inheritance among his sons. And the land of Gilead belonged to the rest of the sons of Manasseh.*

As happens more often, here too the enumeration of names is interrupted by a short history. Such histories have an important place. In this case, something is told that is present in the hearts during the distribution of the cities. We saw that with Caleb and Achsah. Here we see it with the daughters of Zelophehad.

The daughters of Zelophehad consciously choose for an inheritance "among our brothers" in the land and not in the other half of the tribe that has chosen the wilderness side of the Jordan. Women share as much in the inheritance as men. Their public conduct may be regulated by God in a different way than that of men, but their share in spiritual blessings is not.

Normally only the sons inherit. Daughters who marry share in the inheritance of the man they marry. Zelophehad has only daughters. Zelophehad died in the wilderness, so he can't go to Joshua. His daughters can, and they do. Before going through the Jordan, they went to Moses to ask for an inheritance (Num 27:1-11). Now they come to Eleazar and Joshua to claim the promised inheritance. In the four times Joshua and Eleazar are mentioned together in this book (verse 4; Jos 14:1; 19:51; 21:1), Eleazar always comes first.

The daughters show faith. They could have said: 'What do we need an inheritance for? When we get married, we will get it.' But they have understood God's thoughts that He wants to give each family an inheritance. The women show an interest in what God has in mind for their family. There is not only a general interest in the land among them, but they wish

a portion of the land which God has specially destined for them. They give God the opportunity, as it were, to fulfill His purpose. They have, so to speak, a twofold faith that argues:

1. God has something for us and we don't want to miss it.
2. We will not be prevented from asking for it because of poor conditions.

We can apply this to listening to or reading what a brother passes on from Scripture. This is good and important, but that is not yet what God has for us personally. This brother can only pass on what he has taken possession of himself. His service will encourage us to take possession of what the Lord has given us each personally. A sister should therefore read the Word herself and not leave it to her husband or the brothers of the local church.

We should not be satisfied with what others have collected for us. If we desire to receive from God what He has personally in mind as blessing for us, He will give it. Weakness and want are no reason to renounce the part God has personally assigned us.

The faith of these women gives them each an inheritance and the five sons each receive one. This way the tribe of Manasseh gets ten portions.

### **Verses 7-10 | The Border of Manasseh**

*7 The border of Manasseh ran from Asher to Michmethath which was east of Shechem; then the border went southward to the inhabitants of En-tappuah. 8 The land of Tappuah belonged to Manasseh, but Tappuah on the border of Manasseh [belonged] to the sons of Ephraim. 9 The border went down to the brook of Kanah, southward of the brook (these cities [belonged] to Ephraim among the cities of Manasseh), and the border of Manasseh [was] on the north side of the brook and it ended at the sea. 10 The south side [belonged] to Ephraim and the north side to Manasseh, and the sea was their border; and they reached to Asher on the north and to Issachar on the east.*

Judah got the whole south and Ephraim and Manasseh get the whole north, until the later Galilee. This shows the special place of the sons of Joseph. It is a big piece. Not much remains for the other tribes. Their territory extends from the Jordan in the east to the sea in the west. In the

south Manasseh borders on Ephraim, in the north it borders on Asher and Issachar, with Asher in the northwest and Issachar in the northeast.

### Verses 11-13 | Cities of Manasseh in Issachar and Asher

*11 In Issachar and in Asher, Manasseh had Beth-shean and its towns and Ibleam and its towns, and the inhabitants of Dor and its towns, and the inhabitants of En-dor and its towns, and the inhabitants of Taanach and its towns, and the inhabitants of Megiddo and its towns, the third is Napheth. 12 But the sons of Manasseh could not take possession of these cities, because the Canaanites persisted in living in that land. 13 It came about when the sons of Israel became strong, they put the Canaanites to forced labor, but they did not drive them out completely.*

Manasseh has cities with their towns in the territory of the tribes of Issachar and Asher. God has appointed it in such a way that each tribe has its particularly inalienable inheritance, but also that they will still mix with each other. As a result, there remains mutual familiarity and fellowship between them. There will be an opportunity to give each other good service. All of this suits a people who, although made up of different tribes, still form one Israel and are therefore obliged to love each other as brothers.

Manasseh did not take possession of the cities due to lack of strength, that is, faith, to drive out the enemy. He did not take possession of the inheritance as a 'church'. The extermination must be done so that the surviving enemy will not become a trap for them (Deu 20:17-18).

### Verses 14-18 | The Sons of Joseph Demand More Space

*14 Then the sons of Joseph spoke to Joshua, saying, "Why have you given me only one lot and one portion for an inheritance, since I am a numerous people whom the LORD has thus far blessed?" 15 Joshua said to them, "If you are a numerous people, go up to the forest and clear a place for yourself there in the land of the Perizzites and of the Rephaim, since the hill country of Ephraim is too narrow for you." 16 The sons of Joseph said, "The hill country is not enough for us, and all the Canaanites who live in the valley land have chariots of iron, both those who are in Beth-shean and its towns and those who are in the valley of Jezreel." 17 Joshua spoke to the house of Joseph, to Ephraim and*

*Manasseh, saying, "You are a numerous people and have great power; you shall not have one lot [only], 18 but the hill country shall be yours. For though it is a forest, you shall clear it, and to its farthest borders it shall be yours; for you shall drive out the Canaanites, even though they have chariots of iron [and] though they are strong."*

The sons of Joseph turn to Joshua because they are not sure where to live. In their opinion, the forests make it impossible to live there and there are still enemies they do not feel able to cope with. They see quite a few obstacles. They don't say that in so many words. Their argument is that they are a great people who need more land. Joshua has the wisdom to understand this and does not allow himself to be misled by them. There is a lack of commitment and faith in them. He points out to them the possibilities. If they make an effort, they can cut down trees, and if they have faith, they need not be afraid of the enemy. If they have faith, they will drive out their enemies.

Joshua's proposal will make it clear what is in them. If they listen to it, they will make their home territory larger. So they don't get more land, but they can make the land they have been given habitable by removing obstacles.

We should not raise objections or reservations against what God has given us. If we do that, we look like people "finding fault" (Jude 1:16). Our arguments like 'no time', 'no strength', 'no possibilities' do not hold up for the true Joshua. It is not our strength that matters, but our faith in the power of God.



# Joshua 18

## Introduction

To really take possession of the land the LORD has given His people, there must be effort. The command is to describe the land. Are we able to describe something of the heavenly land given to us? The true Joshua, the Lord Jesus, wants to hear from us what we think of the land. We may tell Him what we have read in the Bible. The more blessings we discover in it, the more He will give us. He Himself said: "For to everyone who has, [more] shall be given" (Mt 25:29a).

The inheritance of the Levites is the priesthood of the LORD. This is a special inheritance. It is directly related to the LORD and shows us that above all blessings we may look at Him Who is the Giver of those blessings. Greater than the greatest blessing is surely He from Whom the blessing emanates, isn't it?

## **Verse 1 | From Gilgal to Shiloh**

*1 Then the whole congregation of the sons of Israel assembled themselves at Shiloh, and set up the tent of meeting there; and the land was subdued before them.*

The people move up to a new place, Shiloh, and gather there. Judah and the sons of Joseph have been assigned their portion in Gilgal, where the people have so far been together as a whole. There also stood the tabernacle, in which God dwelled in their midst. Now the tent of meeting is set up at Shiloh, which means 'peace'. Shiloh is located in the center of the land.

In the spiritual development of a believer we see the next step in the ascending from Gilgal to Shiloh. First Gilgal, then Shiloh. In Gilgal we get to know the flesh and the judgment on it. In Shiloh there is a sharing in the rest of God.

The advance to Shiloh is worked by God. He wants to dwell in that place and have His people with Him. It will be a temporary dwelling place in the land. In the time that Eli is judge, God leaves Shiloh (1Sam 4:1-11; Psa

78:60). Until that time, that is for about three hundred years, the tent is in Shiloh. There God makes His Name dwell, but He leaves because of the wickedness of Israel: “But go now to My place which was in Shiloh, where I made My name dwell at the first, and see what I did to it because of the wickedness of My people Israel” (Jer 7:12).

This reminds us of Deuteronomy 12, where we read of God’s command to His people that they will seek Him where He establishes His Name to dwell (Deu 12:5). That takes effort. For us, it means investigating Scripture to get to know that place. It is not about a place where you feel good, but where the Lord Jesus is in the midst (Mt 18:20). That place must be found in the Word.

Shiloh is a provisional fulfillment of what will be fully fulfilled in Jerusalem. Did Israel find that place? They have not been aware that it is Jebus. Only David finds it (Psa 132:6). Jerusalem lies between Benjamin and Judah. Shiloh lies in Ephraim, rather central.

To some extent, the people have found peace in Shiloh. Peace is not just the absence of war. Peace is a benevolent atmosphere in which harmony is found. The true Shiloh for us is where the true Shiloh, the Lord Jesus, the Prince of Peace (Gen 49:10; Isa 9:6), is present.

In the book of Numbers “the tent of meeting” is also called “the tent of testimony”. That name is connected to the wilderness journey, where all the tribes around the tent have set up their camp. The order of the tribes is arranged in connection with the tent. It has to do with our testimony to the world. In the land the tent is called “the tent of meeting”. The people dwell in the land in connection with the center, the place where God dwells and where He would like to meet with His people.

### **Verses 2-10 | The Land Not Yet Divided**

*2 There remained among the sons of Israel seven tribes who had not divided their inheritance. 3 So Joshua said to the sons of Israel, “How long will you put off entering to take possession of the land which the LORD, the God of your fathers, has given you? 4 Provide for yourselves three men from each tribe that I may send them, and that they may arise and walk through the land and write a description of it according to their inheritance; then they shall return to me.*

5 They shall divide it into seven portions; Judah shall stay in its territory on the south, and the house of Joseph shall stay in their territory on the north. 6 You shall describe the land in seven divisions, and bring [the description] here to me. I will cast lots for you here before the LORD our God. 7 For the Levites have no portion among you, because the priesthood of the LORD is their inheritance. Gad and Reuben and the half-tribe of Manasseh also have received their inheritance eastward beyond the Jordan, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave them." 8 Then the men arose and went, and Joshua commanded those who went to describe the land, saying, "Go and walk through the land and describe it, and return to me; then I will cast lots for you here before the LORD in Shiloh." 9 So the men went and passed through the land, and described it by cities in seven divisions in a book; and they came to Joshua to the camp at Shiloh. 10 And Joshua cast lots for them in Shiloh before the LORD, and there Joshua divided the land to the sons of Israel according to their divisions.

There are still seven tribes that have not received any inheritance. It seems that they have remained slow. Maybe they didn't feel like fighting as a tribe alone for the conquest of the inheritance. It may have been a good idea for them to stay together and they don't like it to be separated. This is why Joshua is going to help the people. They must supply three men per tribe. He sends them out to describe the remaining land, to map it out, so to speak. This will give them an impression of what remains to be taken into their possession.

As an application we can think of the following. When the believers have got an eye for the heavenly blessings of the church, especially in the revival at the beginning of the nineteenth century, these believers have inherited richly. If we compare them to Judah and the Josephites, they have conquered much of the land. They have written down the riches of it. We can read about it and so enjoy it.

But is there still something for ourselves which can be divided? Those who lived before us and took possession of land by battle, have certainly inherited richly. But also for us there is a portion. God wrote it in a book to show us what is left. We only find blessings in the Book, the Word of God. Paul prays – and we may do so as well – that we will learn to know our blessings (Eph 1:18; 3:18-19). We will then say with the psalmist: "The LORD is the portion of my inheritance and my cup; You support my lot. The lines

have fallen to me in pleasant places; indeed, my heritage is beautiful to me” (Psa 16:5-6).

We are not in a position comparable to that of Judah and the sons of Joseph, but to that of the other tribes. When we ask God to show us the spiritual blessings, He also gives us blessings to enjoy. We did get them, but we may also make them our own. The letters of the New Testament to believers who live in an end-time, show the part that is also there for them. That part we see par excellence in the letters of John. This is about the eternal life, which is for us the blessing of the land. God has put everything in order for us, so that we too, in our time, can take possession of land.

The land is described “according to their inheritance” (verse 4). Everyone gets the appropriate part of the land. For us, “to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift” (Eph 4:7). The land is also described “by cities” (verse 9). If we can see a picture of local churches in the cities, then we see in this description that the blessing of the remaining land is also given in a church context.

Joshua casts the lot, in dependence on God, before Him, and assigns the seven parts of the land to the seven tribes. Joshua has no successor, but the priest Eleazar does. Priests have always been there. That’s how it is with us. We no longer have apostles, but we do have the priestly family. As long as there are believers who want to practically experience their priesthood by gathering as a priestly people at the tent of meeting, their inheritances will also be made known.

### **Verse 11 | Location of the Inheritance of Benjamin**

*11 Now the lot of the tribe of the sons of Benjamin came up according to their families, and the territory of their lot lay between the sons of Judah and the sons of Joseph.*

By the lot, which is God’s providence, the rest of the land is divided. The division of the land is not a coincidence or an own choice, but it happens according to God’s plan. After Joseph has received his inheritance, it is Benjamin’s turn, Jacob’s second son of his favorite wife, Rachel, to receive his inheritance.

In Joshua 19-20 follow the sons of Leah who have not yet received an inheritance. Judah has already been assigned his part, Reuben has his inheritance in the wilderness side of the Jordan, Levi has no inheritance. Then come Simeon, Zebulun and Issachar. Then the sons of the slaves receive their inheritance. Of Zilpah this is only Asher, because Gad also chose the wilderness side of the Jordan language. Finally, the two sons of Bilhah, Naphtali and Dan, receive their inheritance.

Each tribe has its own history. We can apply this to each individual local church. Each local church has its own spiritual history. This may be one of which one should be ashamed, or one of which one can rejoice. This history can also consist of periods of rejoicing, for example when there is growth in number or an increase in interest for the truths of God's Word. In other periods there is little joy because believers leave or even have to be removed from among the believers because of sin. Our behavior, our mind in those different periods, determines our history.

### **Verses 12-20 | The Borders of the Inheritance of Benjamin**

*12 Their border on the north side was from the Jordan, then the border went up to the side of Jericho on the north, and went up through the hill country westward, and it ended at the wilderness of Beth-aven. 13 From there the border continued to Luz, to the side of Luz (that is, Bethel) southward; and the border went down to Ataroth-addar, near the hill which [lies] on the south of lower Beth-horon. 14 The border extended [from there] and turned round on the west side southward, from the hill which [lies] before Beth-horon southward; and it ended at Kiriath-baal (that is, Kiriath-jearim), a city of the sons of Judah. This [was] the west side. 15 Then the south side [was] from the edge of Kiriath-jearim, and the border went westward and went to the fountain of the waters of Nephtoah. 16 The border went down to the edge of the hill which is in the valley of Ben-hinnom, which is in the valley of Rephaim northward; and it went down to the valley of Hinnom, to the slope of the Jebusite southward, and went down to En-rogel. 17 It extended northward and went to En-shemesh and went to Geliloth, which is opposite the ascent of Adummim, and it went down to the stone of Bohan the son of Reuben. 18 It continued to the side in front of the Arabah northward and went down to the Arabah. 19 The border continued to the side of Beth-hoglah northward; and the border ended at the*

*north bay of the Salt Sea, at the south end of the Jordan. This [was] the south border. 20 Moreover, the Jordan was its border on the east side. This [was] the inheritance of the sons of Benjamin, according to their families [and] according to its borders all around.*

From Joshua 13 onward, two elements relating to inheritance have emerged: division and taking possession. The division, that is the plan, the council of God, is fixed. Taking possession is the practice, the responsibility of each tribe.

Now there is something else to add and that is how the tribes relate to each other. The borders between the tribes are established. Some borders are described twice. If it is a border between two tribes, this border is mentioned for both the one and the other tribe.

These borders are different from what they will be in the realm of peace. In the realm of peace the tribes are divided from north to south in straight strips. As a result, they are separated from each other by a straight line. Then each tribe will have a large part in the land and also a small part in the wilderness side of the Jordan.

In the book of Joshua the borders are much more complicated. There are cities in another area. In the realm of peace, our relations will have nothing complicated. Everything is clear. But as the borders are set here, it is confusing.

Thus, the borders between individual believers and also between local churches are sometimes erratic. We can learn something about those interfaces between believers and churches by comparing them to a body. Then we speak about 'each individual part' that has a certain task or contribution compared to other parts (Eph 4:16).

In a body, the bones are connected by joints. A joint does not represent our special service – we see that more in the member – but our functioning between the other members. We have a connection with each of the other members of the body. It depends on our performance how the other members deal with each other. It depends on the functioning of the local church how other local churches interact with each other. In everything, the personal connection with the Head is of decisive importance.

Benjamin borders in the south on Judah's northern border and in the north on Ephraim. Benjamin, which itself is small, lies between two large territories. Yet Benjamin did not focus on the great Judah or the great Ephraim, but has a history of his own. It has its dark sides, but also its light ones.

In Judges 20 Benjamin plays a bad role. There Benjamin protects the evil, creating a civil war. Later Benjamin chose Judah when the kingdom was split and not Ephraim. There he plays a good role (1Kgs 12:21). From him comes the first king, Saul (1Sam 9:1). Another Saul also comes from him, Saulus of Tarsus, that is Paul (Phil 3:4-5).

### Verses 21-28 | The Cities of the Sons of Benjamin

*21 Now the cities of the tribe of the sons of Benjamin according to their families were Jericho and Beth-hoglah and Emek-keziz, 22 and Beth-arabah and Zemaraim and Bethel, 23 and Avvim and Parah and Ophrah, 24 and Chephar-ammoni and Ophni and Geba; twelve cities with their villages. 25 Gibeon and Ramah and Beeroth, 26 and Mizpeh and Chephirah and Mozah, 27 and Rekem and Irpeel and Taralah, 28 and Zelah, Haeleph and the Jebusite (that is, Jerusalem), Gibeah, Kiriath; fourteen cities with their villages. This is the inheritance of the sons of Benjamin according to their families.*

Among the cities of the sons of Benjamin are cities with famous names from the history of Israel, such as Jericho, Bethel, Gibeon, Ramah, Mizpeh, and Jebus, which is Jerusalem. The city where the temple will be built is in Benjamin. This is a fulfillment of the prophecy of Moses: "Of Benjamin he said, "May the beloved of the LORD dwell in security by Him, Who shields him all the day, and he dwells between His shoulders"" (Deu 33:12).

## Joshua 19

### Introduction

In this chapter the remaining tribes get their inheritance. Each of the tribes has then been assigned his own piece of land. The borders are indicated precisely. Thus, individually applied, “God has allotted to each a measure of faith” (Rom 12:3). God has given each one exactly enough for the task to be performed. Even when it comes to taking possession of the spiritual blessings, everyone has received from God what is necessary.

This chapter ends with the inheritance of Joshua. He is assigned this by the Israelites, by “the command of the LORD” (verses 49-50). This is wonderful. Christ, in the picture of Joshua, has divided the land among God’s people. As proof of our gratitude to Christ, we as God’s people may give Him an inheritance in our midst. In the meetings of the believers – in “the tent of meeting” (verse 51) – this may become manifest.

### **Verses 1-9 | The Inheritance of Simeon**

*1 Then the second lot fell to Simeon, to the tribe of the sons of Simeon according to their families, and their inheritance was in the midst of the inheritance of the sons of Judah. 2 So they had as their inheritance Beersheba or Sheba and Moladah, 3 and Hazar-shual and Balah and Ezem, 4 and Eltolad and Bethul and Hormah, 5 and Ziklag and Beth-marcaboth and Hazar-susah, 6 and Beth-lebaoth and Sharuhem; thirteen cities with their villages; 7 Ain, Rimmon and Ether and Ashan; four cities with their villages; 8 and all the villages which [were] around these cities as far as Baalath-beer, Ramah of the Negev. This [was] the inheritance of the tribe of the sons of Simeon according to their families. 9 The inheritance of the sons of Simeon [was taken] from the portion of the sons of Judah, for the share of the sons of Judah was too large for them; so the sons of Simeon received [an] inheritance in the midst of Judah’s inheritance.*

By lot, Simeon gets an inheritance in the midst of Judah’s inheritance. Judah has a large inheritance, more than they can maintain themselves. They have enough room for another tribe. Simeon is the smallest of all tribes.



They do not need much land. Thus can the abundance of one serve in the lack of the other (cf. 2Cor 8:14).

A place in the midst of another inheritance is not an easy place. This means an exercise for both Judah and Simeon. Judah is by far the boss of Simeon. Simeon has increasingly merged into Judah, they have not been able to preserve their own character.

The place of Simeon in the territory of Judah can be applied to persons and churches that are hardly recognizable by their own characteristics. They are influenced by other people or churches. One does not have one's own opinion, but relies entirely on others. The exceptions are believers who make a decision out of personal conviction, while others are guided by others.

We see that also when Judah asks Simeon a little later to join him to conquer land (Jdg 1:3). Then it turns out that Simeon does not decide himself before the LORD independently of Judah. Judah acts according to the voice of God, Simeon acts according to the voice of Judah. It would have been better if Simeon had waited for the LORD's voice. When it comes to understanding the voice of the Lord, it is necessary to be independent from others. This also goes for Judah by the way, for why is it necessary to ask Simeon to go along when the LORD has said that they have to go up as a tribe?

Yet later something positive about Simeon is mentioned as well, namely that they desire expansion (1Chr 4:39). They got it too. If we recognize ourselves in a position like Simeon, we don't have to be desperate. Another positive mention of Simeon is that in the time of the apostacy of the ten tribes under Jeroboam many from the Simeon tribe remain faithful to the house of David (2Chr 15:9). A number of residents have moved north, to Ephraim and Manasseh (2Chr 34:6). This is probably the explanation for the fact that only Judah and Benjamin are mentioned as the tribes that followed David's house.

In the part given to Simeon, Jacob's prophecy concerning Simeon and Levi is fulfilled: "I will disperse them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel" (Gen 49:7b). Both the Levites and the Simeonites are scattered, but in a different way. The Simeonites merge into Judah and almost lose their identity. The Levites are spread throughout the land in cities as a blessing for the people.

## Verses 10-16 | The Inheritance of Zebulun

*10 Now the third lot came up for the sons of Zebulun according to their families. And the territory of their inheritance was as far as Sarid. 11 Then their border went up to the west and to Maralah, it then touched Dabbesheth and reached to the brook that is before Jokneam. 12 Then it turned from Sarid to the east toward the sunrise as far as the border of Chisloth-tabor, and it proceeded to Daberath and up to Japhia. 13 From there it continued eastward toward the sunrise to Gath-hepher, to Eth-kazin, and it proceeded to Rimmon which stretches to Neah. 14 The border circled around it on the north to Hannathon, and it ended at the valley of Iphtahel. 15 [Included] also [were] Kattah and Nahalal and Shimron and Idalah and Bethlehem; twelve cities with their villages. 16 This [was] the inheritance of the sons of Zebulun according to their families, these cities with their villages.*

The inheritance of the tribe of Zebulun is bordered on the west side by the Mediterranean Sea and on the east side by the sea of Tiberias. This is in accordance with Jacob's prophecy: "Zebulun will dwell at the seashore" (Gen 49:13). They would have ports for merchant ships on the Mediterranean Sea and for fisher vessels on the sea of Tiberias.

Zebulun is located, together with Naphtali, all the way to the north of Canaan, in Galilee. These are tribes that are so easily forgotten, but not by God. In the dark, northern part of Israel God brings light through the Messiah. The first performance of the Lord Jesus about which we read in the Gospels takes place there. It is the fulfillment of what Isaiah prophesied: "But there will be no [more] gloom for her who was in anguish; in earlier times He treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt, but later on He shall make [it] glorious, by the way of the sea, on the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. The people who walk in darkness will see a great light; those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them" (Isa 9:1-2).

Therefore Matthew also mentions these verses in his account of the life of the Lord Jesus (Mt 4:12-16). He writes his Gospel especially for the Jews and therefore this quote is of great importance. The fulfillment, proved from their own Scriptures, must convince them that in the Lord Jesus the Messiah has come to them.

We can apply this to believers who live spiritually far away. If we no longer have spiritual contact with such believers, we can easily forget them. We can also think of local churches that we forget, because it takes too much effort to reach them. But they are not forgotten by the Lord. He visits them. We must do the same. The Lord Jesus appeared there and brought blessing. Galilee is despised by the clergy, but not by the Lord.

### Verses 17-23 | The Inheritance of Issachar

*17 The fourth lot fell to Issachar, to the sons of Issachar according to their families. 18 Their territory was to Jezreel and [included] Chesulloth and Shunem, 19 and Hapharaim and Shion and Anaharath, 20 and Rabbith and Kishion and Ebez, 21 and Remeth and En-gannim and En-haddah and Beth-pazzez. 22 The border reached to Tabor and Shahazumah and Beth-shemesh, and their border ended at the Jordan; sixteen cities with their villages. 23 This [was] the inheritance of the tribe of the sons of Issachar according to their families, the cities with their villages.*

Issachar's inheritance extends from the Jordan in the east to the Mediterranean Sea in the west. In the south it borders Manasseh and in the north it borders Zebulun.

Tola, one of the judges, is of that tribe (Jdg 10:1), as is Baasha, one of the kings of Israel (1Kgs 15:27). A well-known place in that tribe is Sunem, where the God-fearing woman lives who gives hospitality to Elisha (2Kgs 4:8).

Another well-known place is Jezreel. Naboth lives there (1Kgs 21:1). His neighbor is the mighty, wicked king Ahab, who has set his sights on Naboth's inheritance. By the attempt of Ahab to get the inheritance of Naboth in his possession, the great appreciation Naboth has for the inheritance comes to the fore: "Now it came about after these things that Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard which [was] in Jezreel beside the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. Ahab spoke to Naboth, saying, "Give me your vineyard, that I may have it for a vegetable garden because it is close beside my house, and I will give you a better vineyard than it in its place; if you like, I will give you the price of it in money." But Naboth said to Ahab, "The LORD forbid me that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers"" (1Kgs 21:1-3).

Naboth had to pay for this with death, as we read later in 1 Kings 21 (1Kgs 21:7-13). When it comes to the valuation of the inheritance, there's hardly a greater contrast imaginable than between Naboth and Ahab. Naboth is spiritually related to Caleb.

### **Verses 24-31 | The Inheritance of Asher**

*24 Now the fifth lot fell to the tribe of the sons of Asher according to their families. 25 Their territory was Helkath and Hali and Beten and Achshaph, 26 and Allammelech and Amad and Mishal; and it reached to Carmel on the west and to Shihor-libnath. 27 It turned toward the east to Beth-dagon and reached to Zebulun, and to the valley of Iphtahel northward to Beth-emek and Neiel; then it proceeded on north to Cabul, 28 and Ebron and Rehob and Hammon and Kanah, as far as Great Sidon. 29 The border turned to Ramah and to the fortified city of Tyre; then the border turned to Hosah, and it ended at the sea by the region of Achzib. 30 [Included] also [were] Ummah, and Aphek and Rehob; twenty-two cities with their villages. 31 This [was] the inheritance of the tribe of the sons of Asher according to their families, these cities with their villages.*

The inheritance of Asher lies along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. A well-known member of that tribe is the prophetess Anna (Lk 2:36-38). As a true daughter of Asher she has yielded "royal dainties" (Gen 49:20). These "royal dainties" she distributes after the birth of the Lord Jesus by speaking "of Him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem" (Lk 2:38b).

### **Verses 32-39 | The Inheritance of Naphtali**

*32 The sixth lot fell to the sons of Naphtali; to the sons of Naphtali according to their families. 33 Their border was from Heleph, from the oak in Zaananim and Adami-nekeb and Jabneel, as far as Lakkum, and it ended at the Jordan. 34 Then the border turned westward to Aznoth-tabor and proceeded from there to Hukkok; and it reached to Zebulun on the south and touched Asher on the west, and to Judah at the Jordan toward the east. 35 The fortified cities [were] Ziddim, Zer and Hammath, Rakkath and Chinnereth, 36 and Adamah and Ramah and Hazor, 37 and Kedesh and Edrei and En-hazor, 38 and Yiron and Migdal-el, Horem and Beth-anath and Beth-shemesh; nineteen cities with*

*their villages. 39 This [was] the inheritance of the tribe of the sons of Naphtali according to their families, the cities with their villages.*

In the inheritance of Naphtali we find later Capernaum and Bethsaida, at the northern end of the sea of Tiberias, where the Lord Jesus did so many great works. It is also assumed that this is where the mountain lies, on which Christ has pronounced the so-called 'sermon on the Mount', which we have in Matthew 5-7 (Mt 5:1-2). Together with Zebulun, this tribe had the privilege of seeing the great light that came to them in Christ (Mt 4:12-16).

### **Verses 40-48 | The Inheritance of Dan**

*40 The seventh lot fell to the tribe of the sons of Dan according to their families. 41 The territory of their inheritance was Zorah and Eshtaol and Ir-shemesh, 42 and Shaalabbin and Aijalon and Ithlah, 43 and Elon and Timnah and Ekron, 44 and Eltekeh and Gibbethon and Baalath, 45 and Jehud and Bene-berak and Gath-rimmon, 46 and Me-jarkon and Rakkon, with the territory over against Joppa. 47 The territory of the sons of Dan proceeded beyond them; for the sons of Dan went up and fought with Leshem and captured it. Then they struck it with the edge of the sword and possessed it and settled in it; and they called Leshem Dan after the name of Dan their father. 48 This [was] the inheritance of the tribe of the sons of Dan according to their families, these cities with their villages.*

The tribe of Dan has the most unclear borders. As a large tribe they are only assigned a small territory. Would God be wrong to give Judah too much and Dan too little? God is never mistaken. He is looking ahead. He gives the people the opportunity to exercise, whereby the exercise is different for each tribe.

Later Dan went looking for more territory (Jdg 18:1), after they first lost some of their territory (Jdg 1:34) to brothers and enemies. The territory has become too small by their own fault. Instead of humbling themselves about this, they set off self-willed to seek more territory.

That they do not involve God in their plans is evident from the history in Judges 18. When they have met an idolater, they take him for themselves. Thus Dan becomes the first tribe to introduce idolatry (Jdg 18:30). If God

exercises us and we lose land, what is our reaction? Do we bow down before God or do we act arbitrarily like Dan?

The first two places mentioned, Zorah and Eshtaol, are known from the history of Samson. There he begins, through the Spirit, to perform his first deeds (Jdg 13:25).

### **Verses 49-50 | The Inheritance of Joshua**

*49 When they finished apportioning the land for inheritance by its borders, the sons of Israel gave an inheritance in their midst to Joshua the son of Nun. 50 In accordance with the command of the LORD they gave him the city for which he asked, Timnath-serah in the hill country of Ephraim. So he built the city and settled in it.*

Caleb was the first to receive his inheritance even before the tribes are allocated their inheritance. Now, when all tribes have received their inheritance, Joshua is the last to receive his inheritance. Out of modesty he waited until all had it. This is a big difference with some leaders today who use their position and influence to benefit themselves and their own families as much as possible.

He receives his inheritance as a gift from the Israelites. It is the part that no one has claimed yet. It is the part he wishes. He does not let himself to be crowned king. He dwells among his people as one of them. This is how he owns his inheritance. Joshua is herein a picture of the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus also waits with the questioning of His property or inheritance (Psa 2:8) until all who now belong to His people have received their inheritances.

Joshua asks for Timnath-serah, which means 'abundant portion'. It lies in the mountain range, the territory where his contemporaries do not want to dwell (Jos 17:15-16). With his choice he sets a good example to them.

### **Verse 51 | The Land Is Divided**

*51 These are the inheritances which Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the households of the tribes of the sons of Israel distributed by lot in Shiloh before the LORD at the doorway of the tent of meeting. So they finished dividing the land.*

This conclusion is almost similar to the verse with which the division begins (Jos 14:1). Also here, when Joshua and Eleazar are mentioned together again, Eleazar comes first. Each leadership is good leadership only when practiced in a priestly mind. That is why the priest comes first. A priest is someone who is used to being in the presence of God.

It says of the Lord Jesus: "He will be a priest on His throne" (Zec 6:13b). Here we also see that His reign is done from a priestly mind, that is, from the presence of God and therefore fully in accordance with God's thoughts. This is how leadership should be practiced in the church.

## Joshua 20

### Introduction

After all tribes have received their inheritance, the LORD gives Joshua instructions to designate six cities of refuge. Three of them are in the land and three in the wilderness side of the Jordan. The three cities of refuge in the land are all located in a mountainous land (verse 7), so high and therefore clearly visible. The cities of refuge are a provision of God in case of manslaughter. The manslayer can flee there when he has killed someone by accident.

Each local church may be such a city of refuge. Anyone who becomes aware that he is guilty of the death of the Lord Jesus may flee there. There he hears about the forgiveness of his sins, which can be given on the basis of the same death of Christ. He who does not flee there, dies by the hand of the avenger of blood, that is God Himself. "It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb 10:31).

### **Verses 1-2 | Command to Designate Cities of Refuge**

*1 Then the LORD spoke to Joshua, saying, 2 "Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'Designate the cities of refuge, of which I spoke to you through Moses,*

God has always had cities of refuge in His mind (Exo 21:12-13; Num 35:9-15). Three cities of refuge mentioned by name have already been designated in wilderness side of the Jordan (Deu 4:41-43). Three more cities are now being designated in the land. Moses has already spoken about this in the plains of Moab (Deu 19:1-7). But before they are mentioned by name, the LORD says first for whom the cities of refuge are intended.

### **Verses 3-5 | For Whom the Cities of Refuge Are Intended**

*3 that the manslayer who kills any person unintentionally, without premeditation, may flee there, and they shall become your refuge from the avenger of blood. 4 He shall flee to one of these cities, and shall stand at the entrance of the gate of the city and state his case in the hearing of the elders of that city; and they shall take him into the city to them and give him a place, so that he may*



*dwell among them. 5 Now if the avenger of blood pursues him, then they shall not deliver the manslayer into his hand, because he struck his neighbor without premeditation and did not hate him beforehand.*

God looks ahead that it can happen that someone from the people makes himself unworthy of the land. Manslaughter defiles the land with blood. Such a person may be killed by the avenger of blood. He cannot live any longer in the inheritance. In His grace God provides in case someone accidentally kills another. That's a big difference from someone who deliberately kills another person. In one case there is only a guilty hand, in the other case there is also a guilty heart. If it happens accidentally, the inheritance can still be enjoyed, but to a limited extent, namely in one of the cities of refuge.

We can apply this to the death of the Lord Jesus, by which the people have made themselves unworthy to continue living in the inheritance. But God does not attribute to the people the killing of the Lord Jesus as consciously done. Therefore the Lord Jesus prays on the cross: "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" (Lk 23:34a; cf. Acts 3:17; 1Tim 1:13).

The people had to leave their homes, just as any manslayer has to. Israel had to leave the wrong generation by repenting and being baptized (Acts 2:40-41). Thereby those who do so take a new place. They resort to the church, their city of refuge (cf. Heb 6:18). This is still the case. We can also apply this to the local church, which will be a refuge for anyone fleeing from God's judgment over their sins. There he can hear about confession and forgiveness.

The escape from the avenger of blood by entering the city of refuge begins with an honest confession in the city gate, the place where the administration of the city speaks justice (Rth 4:1,11). The congregation of Israel (verse 6) must determine whether it happened accidentally. If the manslayer is not found guilty, he may enter the city. Stephen says to the elders of Israel that they are murderers of "the Righteous One", that is the Lord Jesus (Acts 7:52). For them there is no city of refuge. Therefore, in the year 70 the judgment came on them in the destruction of Jerusalem.

## Verse 6 | Duration of the Stay in the City of Refuge

*6 He shall dwell in that city until he stands before the congregation for judgment, until the death of the one who is high priest in those days. Then the manslayer shall return to his own city and to his own house, to the city from which he fled.”*

The death of the high priest means the end of the service of the high priest. Prophetically, this means that the Lord Jesus, Who now performs His service in the heavenly sanctuary for the church, will stop that service when He has taken the church to Himself. The consequence of this is that He will reconnect with Israel, which through Him will be brought back into the earthly inheritance.

There is also an application to us, for whom these things happened and are described in the first place (1Cor 10:6,11). The history of professing Christianity is the same as that of Israel. The apostate Christians will perish, they will have no inheritance. Where there is false teaching about the Lord Jesus, there is blame on the death of the Lord Jesus. False teachers place Him outside of Christianity through their false teaching. They say as it were that for Him, the Christ of the Scriptures, there is no place in Christianity. They thus declare Him dead in a spiritual sense.

But there is a distinction to be made. There are, on the one hand, the deceivers and false teachers and, on the other, the great crowd who, in ignorance, are guilty of the manslaughter of the Lord Jesus. Those who, against their better judgement, stay in a place where there is no place for the Christ of the Scriptures, become a conscious manslayer. It is inevitable that they fall into the hands of the avenger of blood because they are dragged along in this wickedness.

However, those who come to the acknowledgment that the Christ of God is ‘murdered’ in the church or group where they are, may resort to the city of refuge. This is a local church where Christ is central in accordance with what God has revealed of Him in His Word.

## Verses 7-9 | The Cities of Refuge and for Whom They Are Intended

*7 So they set apart Kedesh in Galilee in the hill country of Naphtali and Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim, and Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in*

*the hill country of Judah. 8 Beyond the Jordan east of Jericho, they designated Bezer in the wilderness on the plain from the tribe of Reuben, and Ramoth in Gilead from the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan from the tribe of Manasseh. 9 These were the appointed cities for all the sons of Israel and for the stranger who sojourns among them, that whoever kills any person unintentionally may flee there, and not die by the hand of the avenger of blood until he stands before the congregation.*

The cities are 'set apart', that is, separated from the other cities, for God for a purpose determined by Him. The three cities on the wilderness side of the Jordan are mentioned again, according to their location from south to north. The cities in the land are called from north to south.

Kedesh (meaning 'holy') is located in the north, in Galilee. The Lord Jesus lived in Nazareth in Galilee for thirty years. There He has served and taught His disciples and the crowds. He is the city of refuge for them. Shechem (meaning 'shoulder') lies in the middle, in Ephraim. Near Shechem is the well of Jacob (Jn 4:5-6a) where the Lord Jesus speaks with the Samaritan woman and He becomes the city of refuge for her (Jn 4:7,25-26,39). Hebron (meaning 'fellowship') is located in the south. Whoever takes refuge in the Lord Jesus comes into fellowship with Him, the Holy One of God.

A characteristic of a city of refuge is that it lies in the mountains, i.e. high (cf. Mt 5:14). That speaks of an elevated place in the land. The city of refuge is visible to all as a constant sign of the grace of God.

The cities of refuge are also Levite cities. Those who have taken refuge there are in an environment where they are in the presence of priestly service and teaching. There is loss of inheritance, but there is also profit, by constantly being with Levites. It is a great privilege in the end times in which we live to be in a city – as a picture of a local church – where one understands what priestly service is and where God's Word is explained in soundness.

## Joshua 21

### Introduction

The forty-eight Levite cities are scattered throughout the land. The Levites have the task of teaching the law in Israel. Because each tribe gives a few cities to the Levites, all Israelites can benefit from the service of the Levites. It is important that God's servants – today's Levites – are everywhere among God's children to serve them with God's Word.

From verse 43 comes a summary of the division of the land. The LORD gets the honor of all. He gives the land, He gives rest and He gives their enemies in their hands. The only conclusion is: "Not one of the good promises ... failed; all came to pass" (verse 45). He also wants to make Himself known to us in this way in view of the blessings He has given us.

The division of the land has happened. The people may rest. All Christians have received blessings, but not all have taken possession of them. For every step, an enemy must be driven out of our practical life of faith. Then we can take possession of the fruits in the land, the spiritual blessings, that is to say enjoy in our hearts. This is the situation the people have reached here. In our spiritual life we can also come so far that we know and enjoy the spiritual blessings.

### **Verses 1-2 | The Levites Ask for Their Cities**

*1 Then the heads of households of the Levites approached Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of households of the tribes of the sons of Israel. 2 They spoke to them at Shiloh in the land of Canaan, saying, "The LORD commanded through Moses to give us cities to live in, with their pasture lands for our cattle."*

In these cities of the Levites we reach a climax. This is in a way higher than anything we have seen so far. We understand this when we think about the Levites' inheritance. They have not got a certain territory, they do not inherit like the other Israelites. Their possession consists of three great blessings that grow in size: the priesthood, a portion of the offerings

by fire, and the LORD Himself (Jos 13:14,33; 18:7). All that they do, their whole effort, is directed entirely to the LORD, not to the land.

### Verses 3-8 | Cities for the Priests and Levites

*3 So the sons of Israel gave the Levites from their inheritance these cities with their pasture lands, according to the command of the LORD. 4 Then the lot came out for the families of the Kohathites. And the sons of Aaron the priest, who were of the Levites, received thirteen cities by lot from the tribe of Judah and from the tribe of the Simeonites and from the tribe of Benjamin. 5 The rest of the sons of Kohath received ten cities by lot from the families of the tribe of Ephraim and from the tribe of Dan and from the half-tribe of Manasseh. 6 The sons of Gershon received thirteen cities by lot from the families of the tribe of Issachar and from the tribe of Asher and from the tribe of Naphtali and from the half-tribe of Manasseh in Bashan. 7 The sons of Merari according to their families received twelve cities from the tribe of Reuben and from the tribe of Gad and from the tribe of Zebulun. 8 Now the sons of Israel gave by lot to the Levites these cities with their pasture lands, as the LORD had commanded through Moses.*

The Levites must be spread throughout the land, in forty-eight cities. This shows that they have a task for the whole people, or in the name of the whole people. Of the forty-eight, six are cities of refuge. The remaining forty-two, that is seven times six cities, are divided among the families of the three sons of Levi. With the cities the Levites also get pasture lands for their cattle.

### Verses 9-19 | Cities for the Priests

*9 They gave these cities which are [here] mentioned by name from the tribe of the sons of Judah and from the tribe of the sons of Simeon; 10 and they were for the sons of Aaron, one of the families of the Kohathites, of the sons of Levi, for the lot was theirs first. 11 Thus they gave them Kiriath-arba, [Arba being] the father of Anak (that is, Hebron), in the hill country of Judah, with its surrounding pasture lands. 12 But the fields of the city and its villages they gave to Caleb the son of Jephunneh as his possession. 13 So to the sons of Aaron the priest they gave Hebron, the city of refuge for the manslayer, with its pasture lands, and Libnah with its pasture lands, 14 and Jattir with its pasture lands*

*and Eshtemoa with its pasture lands, 15 and Holon with its pasture lands and Debir with its pasture lands, 16 and Ain with its pasture lands and Juttah with its pasture lands [and] Beth-shemesh with its pasture lands; nine cities from these two tribes. 17 From the tribe of Benjamin, Gibeon with its pasture lands, Geba with its pasture lands, 18 Anathoth with its pasture lands and Almon with its pasture lands; four cities. 19 All the cities of the sons of Aaron, the priests, were thirteen cities with their pasture lands.*

The first Levites to be assigned their share are the Kohathites. Among them, Aaron's sons, the priests, occupy a special place. They get thirteen cities. Of these, nine are in Judah, including Simeon, including the city of refuge of Hebron, and four are in Benjamin. This division means that they will live in the right place, near Jerusalem, near the temple. Jerusalem is not yet known as such, but God places them there in view of the time He will dwell there.

The task of the Levites is to teach and to offer incense (Deu 33:10). Their task is a task toward the people and a task toward God. In their duty toward the people, they must teach the people the whole truth of God. Their duty toward God is to bring Him offerings. In our life as Christians, the two aspects of the Levites are connected. We have a task toward God and a task toward the people around us. Toward God we are "a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1Pet 2:5b). Toward the people we are "a royal priesthood", to proclaim the excellencies of God (1Pet 2:9).

As said, dividing the cities among the Levites is in a way a climax. We have seen everything God has prepared for His people so far. He gave the people the strength to conquer the land and also gave them the wisdom to divide the land. But this is not all. The most important thing is not what we have received, but what God receives. We see this in the Levites.

Levites are given to the priests to help them to bring offerings. Through the teaching they give, the people learn how they can bring to God something that is pleasing to Him. They always show the people to Whom they owe the blessings. That also applies to us. Every service among the believers must be aimed at creating true worship.

The service of worship rises above gratitude for what we have received. For example, the Levite of the New Testament is the servant who explains God's Word. In his teaching he presents to the people the blessing that the church in Christ has received. That will work in the hearts of the believers worship of God. For all that we have received is to the praise of His glory (Eph 1:6,12,14). When we have seen some of the blessings, we honor, praise, worship. For this we "have our access in one Spirit to the Father" (Eph 2:18). We see it in Paul himself, how he bows his knees before the Father of the Lord Jesus (Eph 3:14).

It is the wonderful task of the Levites among all the people to get the people to worship the Father (Jn 4:23-24). How much do we personally owe to brothers who have shown the blessings to us, to turn our hearts from the blessings to Him from Whom these blessings come.

### Verses 20-26 | Cities for the Sons of Kohath

*20 Then the cities from the tribe of Ephraim were allotted to the families of the sons of Kohath, the Levites, [even to] the rest of the sons of Kohath. 21 They gave them Shechem, the city of refuge for the manslayer, with its pasture lands, in the hill country of Ephraim, and Gezer with its pasture lands, 22 and Kibzaim with its pasture lands and Beth-horon with its pasture lands; four cities. 23 From the tribe of Dan, Elteke with its pasture lands, Gibbethon with its pasture lands, 24 Aijalon with its pasture lands, Gath-rimmon with its pasture lands; four cities. 25 From the half-tribe of Manasseh, [they allotted] Taanach with its pasture lands and Gath-rimmon with its pasture lands; two cities. 26 All the cities with their pasture lands for the families of the rest of the sons of Kohath were ten.*

The remaining Kohathites (possibly descendants of Moses) get ten cities, including the city of refuge Shechem, in the territories of Ephraim, Dan and Manasseh that lies on the west side of the Jordan, which is in the land.

### Verses 27-33 | Cities for the Sons of Gershon

*27 To the sons of Gershon, one of the families of the Levites, from the half-tribe of Manasseh, [they gave] Golan in Bashan, the city of refuge for the manslayer, with its pasture lands, and Be-eshterah with its pasture lands; two cities. 28 From the tribe of Issachar, [they gave] Kishion with its pasture lands, Daber-*

*ath with its pasture lands, 29 Jarmuth with its pasture lands, En-gannim with its pasture lands; four cities. 30 From the tribe of Asher, [they gave] Mishal with its pasture lands, Abdon with its pasture lands, 31 Helkath with its pasture lands and Rehob with its pasture lands; four cities. 32 From the tribe of Naphtali, [they gave] Kedesh in Galilee, the city of refuge for the manslayer, with its pasture lands and Hammoth-dor with its pasture lands and Kartan with its pasture lands; three cities. 33 All the cities of the Gershonites according to their families were thirteen cities with their pasture lands.*

The Gershonites get thirteen cities in the territory of Issachar, Asher and Manasseh which lies on the eastern side of the Jordan, the wilderness side of the Jordan. Among their cities are two cities of refuge: Golan in Bashan and Kedes in Galilee.

#### **Verses 34-40 | Cities for the Sons of Merari**

*34 To the families of the sons of Merari, the rest of the Levites, [they gave] from the tribe of Zebulun, Jokneam with its pasture lands and Kartah with its pasture lands. 35 Dimnah with its pasture lands, Nahalal with its pasture lands; four cities. 36 From the tribe of Reuben, [they gave] Bezer with its pasture lands and Jahaz with its pasture lands, 37 Kedemoth with its pasture lands and Mephaath with its pasture lands; four cities. 38 From the tribe of Gad, [they gave] Ramoth in Gilead, the city of refuge for the manslayer, with its pasture lands and Mahanaim with its pasture lands, 39 Heshbon with its pasture lands, Jazer with its pasture lands; four cities in all. 40 All [these were] the cities of the sons of Merari according to their families, the rest of the families of the Levites; and their lot was twelve cities.*

The sons of Merari get twelve cities in the territory of Zebulun in the land, and in Reuben and Gad in the wilderness side of the Jordan. The city of refuge among their cities, Ramoth, is located in Gad, in the wilderness side of the Jordan. Of the forty-eight Levite cities, ten are in the wilderness side of the Jordan.

#### **Verses 41-42 | The Territory of the Levite Cities**

*41 All the cities of the Levites in the midst of the possession of the sons of Israel were forty-eight cities with their pasture lands. 42 These cities each had its surrounding pasture lands; thus [it was] with all these cities.*



This final count does not quite fit with the enumeration in 1 Chronicles 6 (1Chr 6:39-66). A simple explanation for this difference can be that at the time of the allocation of the cities, some of them still have to be conquered. Like the other tribes, the Levites may not have succeeded in driving out all enemies.

### **Verses 43-45 | The LORD Has Fulfilled His Promise**

*43 So the LORD gave Israel all the land which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they possessed it and lived in it. 44 And the LORD gave them rest on every side, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers, and no one of all their enemies stood before them; the LORD gave all their enemies into their hand. 45 Not one of the good promises which the LORD had made to the house of Israel failed; all came to pass.*

When the land and the cities are divided, it is said again emphatically: "So the LORD gave Israel all the land." The fact that they have taken possession of it is its consequence. Everything has gone out from the LORD. The people have not yet overcome all enemies, but they do have control over the whole land.

There is talk of a special rest (verse 44). Joshua 11 also speaks of rest (Jos 11:23). That is the rest after the battle, a first rest, after conquering the land and taking possession of it, although there are still some enemies left. In Joshua 14 we find a second rest (Jos 14:15). Then we have already had something of the division of the land. We experience this second rest after fighting in personal faithfulness (Caleb) and in this way discovering and enjoying the blessings.

The rest here, in Joshua 21, goes furthest (verse 44). It is the rest which the LORD gives to his people. The Levites have taken their cities. Now there rises from the people through their service worship to God. There the rest is not focused on the blessings, but on Him Who has given the blessings. This is the best rest: in the presence of God Himself.

In a literal sense Joshua did not bring them in the rest either, "for if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day after that" (Heb 4:8). Even under David and Solomon there is no question of constant rest. The true and undisturbed rest will be brought by the Lord

Jesus when He establishes His kingdom of righteousness and peace: the millennial realm of peace.

Now that everything of the land is divided and every tribe has taken possession of what they have received, the fulfillment of “the good promises” of the LORD has come. His “good promises” are the promises He has made and with which He has begun to make them to Abraham: “The LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your descendants I will give this land”” (Gen 12:7a).

What He promises is good. He will not leave any promise unfulfilled, but will make everything come true. We will say this once we are with Him in His glory. Looking forward to this will give strength to walk now in faith and hope.

With entering into the rest of God, the book is actually over. What follows are three chapters containing warnings and encouragements.

## Joshua 22

### Introduction

The two and a half tribes may return home after Israel has taken possession of the land. Joshua praises their loyalty and exhorts them to continue serving the LORD. Yet these two and a half tribes causes worry by the building of a large altar. The other tribes, led by Phinehas, are right to head out to it. Phinehas points out that there is only one altar: the altar in the tabernacle (verse 19). That is the place where the people of God come together. By erecting this other altar, the unity of the people of God is broken.

This is still the case in professing Christianity. There the altar is called the Lord's Table (1Cor 10:18-21). At the Table of the Lord the unity of the church is expressed in the celebration of the Supper (1Cor 10:16-17; 11:23-25). But many churches and groups have built their own altar and thereby emphasized the division.

Phinehas and the people are satisfied with the answer of the two and a half tribes, because they are sincere. This does not mean that they acknowledge this altar. Nor do we need to condemn tables set up by men if there is sincerity in serving God. However, it is important that we know for ourselves at which 'altar' we are.

The basis of the two and a half tribes' attitude is that they preferred the wilderness side of the Jordan over the land chosen by God. What they have chosen is no longer the wilderness. It belongs to the inheritance. It is their property, for God has given it to them. But it was not God's intention that they should be content with it.

The part they have chosen does not speak of the blessings of the land, for which it is necessary to cross the Jordan. It represents the earthly blessings as a gift from Him. It is God's purpose, however, that all tribes have a large part in the land and a small part outside the land, on the other side of the Jordan. This goal will be achieved in the realm of peace.

In the picture it is about real Christians who have also fought for and conquered the inheritance. They know the inheritance. Yet they never en-

joyed it in reality. They don't know how to deal with it. They only enjoy the earthly things. If we thank God every day only for things such as our health, our work, and our gaze does not go beyond these earthly blessings, then we are poor Christians.

### Verses 1-5 | Back to the Wilderness Side of the Jordan

*1 Then Joshua summoned the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh, 2 and said to them, "You have kept all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, and have listened to my voice in all that I commanded you. 3 You have not forsaken your brothers these many days to this day, but have kept the charge of the commandment of the LORD your God. 4 And now the LORD your God has given rest to your brothers, as He spoke to them; therefore turn now and go to your tents, to the land of your possession, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you beyond the Jordan. 5 Only be very careful to observe the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, to love the LORD your God and walk in all His ways and keep His commandments and hold fast to Him and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul."*

The time has now come to send the two and a half tribes back to their families, who did not go with them through the Jordan. Although in fulfilling their promise they have done no more than their duty, Joshua praises their loyalty. All those who have been busy for the Lord will say: "We are unworthy slaves; we have done [only] that which we ought to have done" (Lk 17:10). But the Lord will praise and reward that service (Mt 25:21).

Regarding their mindset, they have always longed for this moment. After seeing so much of the land, they still give up its wealth, even though they receive an enormous amount of blessing from the land, all treasures they have captured from the enemy (verse 8). Instead of calling their families to join them in the land, which is still possible (verse 19), they choose to leave the land of the LORD. Those who were the first to receive their inheritances can now enjoy them as the last.

Their departure from the land of the LORD makes it clear that they have no real interest in it. Therefore they do not have to expect that their families, their children, will be interested in the inheritance of God's people.

The latter can only be so, if they notice that the inheritance means much to their parents, that this is the life of the soul of their parents. God does not force us if we do not want the inheritance and are content with the lesser. God allows them to go back for that reason.

Joshua gives them some insistent exhortations. They may have been released from their military obligations, but their spiritual obligations have not changed. To receive the blessing of the LORD it is necessary to hold fast to God's commandments, to love and follow Him, and to serve Him with all their heart and soul. Joshua is like a worried father who gives good advice to his children who want to stand on their own two feet and who are therefore no longer under the protecting influence of home.

### Verses 6-8 | Joshua Blesses the Wilderness Side Tribes

*6 So Joshua blessed them and sent them away, and they went to their tents. 7 Now to the one half-tribe of Manasseh Moses had given [a possession] in Bashan, but to the other half Joshua gave [a possession] among their brothers westward beyond the Jordan. So when Joshua sent them away to their tents, he blessed them, 8 and said to them, "Return to your tents with great riches and with very much livestock, with silver, gold, bronze, iron, and with very many clothes; divide the spoil of your enemies with your brothers."*

Joshua blesses the tribes of the wilderness side of the Jordan and lets them go. They are allowed to return to their families through the Jordan. It is telling that this time the ark does not go out before them. It stays in the land. By going back they turn their backs on the ark, the symbol of God's presence.

Joshua does not let them return empty-handed. He gives them much of the wealth they have conquered in the land. No one who works for the Lord and His people will remain unrewarded. They must divide the spoil with their brothers who have stayed behind. This is comparable to what Moses said earlier in another situation: "And divide the booty between the warriors who went out to battle and all the congregation" (Num 31:27; cf. 1Sam 30:24). Believers who stand in the front lines and make spiritual profits there will share them with the 'home front', these are those who have prayed for them (cf. Acts 14:26-27).

### Verses 9-10 | A Large Altar

*9 The sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh returned [home] and departed from the sons of Israel at Shiloh which is in the land of Canaan, to go to the land of Gilead, to the land of their possession which they had possessed, according to the command of the LORD through Moses. 10 When they came to the region of the Jordan which is in the land of Canaan, the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh built an altar there by the Jordan, a large altar in appearance.*

The two and a half tribes move away from the Israelites and from Shiloh. It does not say that they are leaving the nine and a half tribes, but they “departed from the sons of Israel”. What lives in the land is Israel. The two and a half tribes remain part of God’s people. But those who live in the land are the expression of all the people. They experience this unity at the altar – for us this is the Lord’s Table – for there the LORD dwells.

They didn’t feel completely happy with it. It seems that they are aware that they are going down a dangerous road. They see the threat that a separation will take place among the people of God. To prevent this they make an altar. It is a large altar, something that impresses. This fake altar is larger than the real one. If one does not have the real thing, one wants an imitation that is exciting for the human eye.

They don’t mean anything wrong with it. They do not want an altar of idols, not even an altar to bring sacrifices to the LORD. They only want the altar as a picture of their unity with the whole people. But it happens in a human way. Something that is well meant is therefore not yet good. They want to show unity, but give the impression to want to go their own way, in independence from the people of God. The consequences are the opposite of what they meant by it.

### Verses 11-14 | Inquiry About the Altar

*11 And the sons of Israel heard [it] said, “Behold, the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh have built an altar at the frontier of the land of Canaan, in the region of the Jordan, on the side [belonging to] the sons of Israel.” 12 When the sons of Israel heard [of it], the whole congregation of the sons of Israel gathered themselves at Shiloh to go up against them in*

*war. 13 Then the sons of Israel sent to the sons of Reuben and to the sons of Gad and to the half-tribe of Manasseh, into the land of Gilead, Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, 14 and with him ten chiefs, one chief for each father's household from each of the tribes of Israel; and each one of them [was] the head of his father's household among the thousands of Israel.*

The people come together in Shiloh, by the LORD. What they have heard calls for disciplinary action. After all, there may be no other altar than the altar of the LORD (Deu 12:5). Evil must be stopped, otherwise it will soon gain the upper hand. They are willing to fight.

Yet they do not act in haste, but with reason. They first want to investigate the matter closely and not act upon impressions (Deu 13:14). God Himself shows in the judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah that He works in this way (Gen 18:21). Therefore they decide to first send messengers to get acquainted with the matter. Phinehas is sent, of whom is known how he stands for the honor of the LORD. He has a feeling for the holiness of God (Num 25:6-15). He is accompanied by ten chiefs, one from each tribe.

### **Verses 15-20 | The Impression the Altar Makes**

*15 They came to the sons of Reuben and to the sons of Gad and to the half-tribe of Manasseh, to the land of Gilead, and they spoke with them saying, 16 "Thus says the whole congregation of the LORD, 'What is this unfaithful act which you have committed against the God of Israel, turning away from following the LORD this day, by building yourselves an altar, to rebel against the LORD this day? 17 Is not the iniquity of Peor enough for us, from which we have not cleansed ourselves to this day, although a plague came on the congregation of the LORD, 18 that you must turn away this day from following the LORD? If you rebel against the LORD today, He will be angry with the whole congregation of Israel tomorrow. 19 If, however, the land of your possession is unclean, then cross into the land of the possession of the LORD, where the LORD's tabernacle stands, and take possession among us. Only do not rebel against the LORD, or rebel against us by building an altar for yourselves, besides the altar of the LORD our God. 20 Did not Achan the son of Zerah act unfaithfully in the things under the ban, and wrath fall on all the congregation of Israel? And that man did not perish alone in his iniquity.'"*

Phinehas and the ten chiefs come to the two and a half tribes. They speak with them on behalf of the whole people. They address those who also belong to the people, but who in practical terms do not live up to it. The accusation is: acting unfaithfully against the LORD and His people, which will have bad consequences for all people. To underline their words, the delegation points to two examples that they also know and in which sin has also brought discipline over the whole people: the iniquity of Peor, and Achan who has seized of the things under the ban. These examples show two major dangers, also in the church, as to holiness.

At Peor, the terrible thing is the teaching of Balaam to destroy the people of God by mixing good and false religion, the service of God and that of the idols of Midian (Num 25:1-3; 31:16). Then the true religion is increasingly outstripped by idolatry. Therefore, God's wrath has come upon the whole. Phinehas warns the two and a half tribes of this danger with the building of this altar. The construction may seem small in comparison with the iniquity of Peor, but if this iniquity is not nipped in the bud it will have the same terrible effect as the iniquity of Peor.

After mentioning the first danger, the second danger is not immediately mentioned. First comes, between the indications of the two dangers, the kind invitation to come to the LORD anyway, to His land and His altar (verse 19). Here we hear that all who belong to God's people – for the church this means: all believers – are invited. Phinehas appeals to their spiritual discernment. Only if they see their chosen inheritance as unclean – that is to say, not sanctified by God's presence – will they want their place in God's land and be allowed to possess it. But the two and a half tribes do not draw that conclusion.

As for the believers of the church, they are all but guests of the Lord at His altar, that is His Table. Those who are there may say to all believers that the Lord also invites them to His Table. It is His Table, not that of a group. It is about the place where the Lord Jesus is, not where such nice or oddly believers are. We must not say: 'Come with us', but: 'Let us remember the Lord together at His Table'.

We can and must only be 'exclusive' to evil. In the face of the good, we must always be open and not closed. All believers are 'free brethren' when it comes to what they are in Christ and all are 'closed brethren' when it



comes to their responsibility. Whoever wants to act according to the Lord's will in this will avoid all sectarianism and likewise the freedom of the flesh.

Every Israelite is invited by Phinehas to come there. Later Hezekiah does the same (2Chr 30:1). It is about the whole people of God, that is now the church of God. The church is represented, among other things, by a body, because that picture aptly depicts the unity of the church, that is, the whole people of God. The Table of the Lord belongs to all the people. There God's people can experience unity in a Scriptural way.

There God's people also find a place of worship and priesthood, while in professing Christianity the emphasis is generally on preaching. Where can we still find the desire to give God what He is entitled to and less the question of what is in it for me? We must not make it more difficult for all who seek this place than Scripture indicates. For this it is necessary to possess and reveal the spirit of someone like Phinehas.

After this invitation follows the second warning example, which is Achan (Jos 7:1,19-26). Achan did not bring false teaching, but was guided by the desire for the worldly things. In him we see how the flesh is given the opportunity to introduce the things of the world into God's people, while they may have no place there. An example of this is the desire to be attractive to young people and therefore to introduce popular forms of worship by using compelling melodies and dance and drama.

### Verses 21-29 | Why the Altar Is Built

*21 Then the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh answered and spoke to the heads of the families of Israel. 22 "The Mighty One, God, the LORD, the Mighty One, God, the LORD! He knows, and may Israel itself know. If [it was] in rebellion, or if in an unfaithful act against the LORD do not save us this day! 23 If we have built us an altar to turn away from following the LORD, or if to offer a burnt offering or grain offering on it, or if to offer sacrifices of peace offerings on it, may the LORD Himself require it. 24 But truly we have done this out of concern, for a reason, saying, 'In time to come your sons may say to our sons, "What have you to do with the LORD, the God of Israel? 25 For the LORD has made the Jordan a border between us and you, [you] sons of Reuben and sons of Gad; you have no portion in the LORD.'" So your sons may make our sons stop fearing the LORD.'* 26 "There-

*fore we said, 'Let us build an altar, not for burnt offering or for sacrifice; 27 rather it shall be a witness between us and you and between our generations after us, that we are to perform the service of the LORD before Him with our burnt offerings, and with our sacrifices and with our peace offerings, so that your sons will not say to our sons in time to come, "You have no portion in the LORD."' 28 Therefore we said, 'It shall also come about if they say [this] to us or to our generations in time to come, then we shall say, "See the copy of the altar of the LORD which our fathers made, not for burnt offering or for sacrifice; rather it is a witness between us and you."' 29 Far be it from us that we should rebel against the LORD and turn away from following the LORD this day, by building an altar for burnt offering, for grain offering or for sacrifice, besides the altar of the LORD our God which is before His tabernacle."*

The two and a half tribes don't get excited by the accusations. They answer calmly. Their responsibility reassures the other tribes. They do not want to introduce idolatry in any way. Nor do they in any way want to offer the LORD sacrifices on that altar. They understand that there is only one altar. By this visible sign, they only want to establish a testimony of unity for their children.

It is well-intentioned, but not correct. The intention to testify of unity is worked out according to a human model. Examples of this we see in confessions of faith. These are always set up to testify to the truth about falsehoods and to preserve the unity of God's people. They originated from a desire to be appreciated in order to establish unity in doctrine for the whole people. But it is a human work.

History has shown that creeds have been placed on an equal footing with and even above Scripture. They play a decisive role in ecclesiastical circles; they must generally be signed in order to belong to that church. In so doing, they have brought division rather than unity. They are well-intentioned, yet human means to preserve unity. The worst false teachers sign the creeds and can continue with their false teachings. Every form of unity that is established by people and is used as a condition to experience unity, does not promote unity, but division.

It is not a seemingly altar that creates unity, but the altar in the place chosen by the Lord does. The altar of the two and a half tribes is a symbol of a

fictional unity. The evangelical alliance is such a fictional unity. The joint organization of large evangelization campaigns by all kinds of churches and groups evokes the picture of the unity of all members involved. But after a campaign, everyone goes back to their own church to celebrate their own supper. For a moment there was an altar of a testimony of unity, but it disappeared soon afterward. At the altar of worship at the place where the Lord Jesus is, they have not appeared.

The fictional unity has not been preserved for long. The tribes of the wilderness side of the Jordan are the first to be deported in scattering (1Chr 5:26). We must learn from this that our unity as Christians is not formed by human means. The Lord has made clear in His Word how we can show the unity of the believers. We do show this unity by celebrating the Lord's Supper at His Table: "Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread" (1Cor 10:16-17).

### Verses 30-33 | Israel Accepts the Statement

*30 So when Phinehas the priest and the leaders of the congregation, even the heads of the families of Israel who [were] with him, heard the words which the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the sons of Manasseh spoke, it pleased them. 31 And Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest said to the sons of Reuben and to the sons of Gad and to the sons of Manasseh, "Today we know that the LORD is in our midst, because you have not committed this unfaithful act against the LORD; now you have delivered the sons of Israel from the hand of the LORD." 32 Then Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest and the leaders returned from the sons of Reuben and from the sons of Gad, from the land of Gilead to the land of Canaan, to the sons of Israel, and brought back word to them. 33 The word pleased the sons of Israel, and the sons of Israel blessed God; and they did not speak of going up against them in war to destroy the land in which the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad were living.*

Israel accepts the statement. The critical situation, where civil war is imminent, has turned for the better. A gentle answer has turned away wrath (Pro 15:1a). The report of the encounter works praise to God.

**Verse 34 | The Name of the Altar**

34 *The sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad called the altar [Witness]; “For,” [they said], “it is a witness between us that the LORD is God.”*

Why should a book that describes the taking possession and distributing of the promised land cover this single history in such detail? This will be because it brings out important principles with a view to the unity of the people of God, in the event that part of that people appears to prefer another position. In the name of the altar is expressed that also the deviating part will maintain its relationship with the LORD as their God, in accordance with the part of the people living in the land.

## Joshua 23

### Introduction

In Joshua 23 and Joshua 24, the last two chapters of the book, the ancient Joshua addresses Israel. He looks back on what the LORD has done to give the people the promised land. Then he tells them how they can continue to enjoy the full blessing of their inheritance. This is first of all by keeping to God's Word in everything. Secondly, this is by keeping oneself separated from the remnants of the peoples that are still around them.

It is the same for us. Only by listening to God's Word in obedience in all things and by remaining separated from the world in all things will we be able to continue to enjoy the tremendous blessings given to us in Christ in the heavenly places.

Joshua 23 and Joshua 24 belong together. It is always a moving moment when a man of God says goodbye at the end of his life. We also see such a moment with Moses (Deu 31:14-30; 32:45-47), with Samuel (1Sam 12:1-25) and with Paul (Acts 20:17-38). The farewell address of Paul is the only address in Acts to believers; the other addresses are all for unbelievers. These are the last words of Paul to the elders of Ephesus.

Joshua is a picture of the glorified Lord Who is now with His people in the Spirit to lead it after the death of Moses who is a picture of the Lord Jesus Who led His people through the wilderness. The Spirit dwells in all believers. But there are also leaders in whom the Spirit works to introduce God's people into the heavenly blessings. The true leaders are those who lead the people of God into the heavenly blessings. What teachers do today is to draw from what the first leaders, who discovered these blessings, the apostles, have passed on.

### **Verses 1-2 | Joshua Calls All Together**

*1 Now it came about after many days, when the LORD had given rest to Israel from all their enemies on every side, and Joshua was old, advanced in years, 2 that Joshua called for all Israel, for their elders and their heads and their judges and their officers, and said to them, "I am old, advanced in years.*

The explanation of these last chapters is not difficult. It is about a time when the leaders and elders are no longer there, but when the Word remains. Leaders may pass away; the words of God they have spoken remain. The Lord Jesus also remains. "Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith. Jesus Christ [is] the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb 13:7-8). Whoever believes, lacks nothing.

In Joshua and the elders we can see the generation of apostles, who are the founders of the church, and the elders they appointed. There comes a moment when Joshua dies. This is followed by a time when the elders are still there. They are, as it were, the second generation. But this generation will also die. And Joshua shows what will happen then. The people will remain alone. There will be no new leader. They will have to rely completely on God only as their Leader. This is also what Paul points to in connection with his passing away: "And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build [you] up and to give [you] the inheritance among all those who are sanctified" (Acts 20:32).

Joshua first speaks to the elders, just as Paul does. Paul commends them to God and to the Word of His grace. He has no successor, no new generation of apostles. But the grace of God does not change, does not pass away, nor does His Word, which always remains with us, as does the Spirit. This allows us to receive and enjoy the inheritance among those who are sanctified. Paul has made known the heavenly blessings. Paul is no longer there, but his words are. So Joshua also wrote everything down (Jos 24:26a).

### **Verses 3-4 | What Is Done for the People**

*3 And you have seen all that the LORD your God has done to all these nations because of you, for the LORD your God is He who has been fighting for you.*

*4 See, I have apportioned to you these nations which remain as an inheritance for your tribes, with all the nations which I have cut off, from the Jordan even to the Great Sea toward the setting of the sun.*

Joshua especially addresses those who have a special responsibility in the midst of God's people. He first wants to impress them with the great grace with which God has worked for His people.

### Verse 5 | The LORD Will Continue to Help Them

*5 The LORD your God, He will thrust them out from before you and drive them from before you; and you will possess their land, just as the LORD your God promised you.*

The history of the conquest of the land is in fact that of the power and faithfulness of God. What they have seen in the past of God's power and faithfulness, they can count on for the future. Joshua points to the grace that will remain with them in the future.

### Verses 6-8 | Call to Faithfulness to God

*6 Be very firm, then, to keep and do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, so that you may not turn aside from it to the right hand or to the left, 7 so that you will not associate with these nations, these which remain among you, or mention the name of their gods, or make [anyone] swear [by them], or serve them, or bow down to them. 8 But you are to cling to the LORD your God, as you have done to this day.*

There are also conditions to be fulfilled. Joshua shows how to preserve the inheritance. He points out the dangers from outside, the peoples around them, with which they should not interfere. Thus Paul warns of intruders, and what will come forth from among them: "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them" (Acts 20:29-30). There are dangers from outside and from inside. We are always surrounded by opponents and we still have the flesh in us.

The association with the remaining peoples begins with the naming of their gods. Therefore they should not even mention their names (Psa 16:4b). Mentioning the names means paying attention to them. Thus the demons behind these idols are given the opportunity to exert their influence on the thinking of God's people. A next step is to swear by them, followed by adhering to them and bowing to them.

Satan always tries to get room for his views first. Once he has been given an opening for this, the practice follows automatically. Therefore the ad-

monition comes to us that certain things should not even be mentioned among us as believers (Eph 5:3-4).

### **Verses 9-10 | The LORD Fights for His People**

*9 For the LORD has driven out great and strong nations from before you; and as for you, no man has stood before you to this day. 10 One of your men puts to flight a thousand, for the LORD your God is He who fights for you, just as He promised you.*

All the victories that the people have achieved are due to God. The enemy is defeated not by their own strength, but by God's strength. That one was able to pursue a thousand is because God fought for them according to His promise (cf. 1Sam 14:6). Without God the strongest army can do nothing, while with God a few can defeat the biggest army.

### **Verse 11 | Appeal to Love the LORD**

*11 So take diligent heed to yourselves to love the LORD your God.*

Here we read for the third time the precept not to deviate from the LORD their God. The first prescription is obedience (verse 6). What we have seen in God's Word, we must do, otherwise we will fall. This obedience can only be brought about by observing the second precept, that our soul cling to the Lord (verse 8), that is to say, knowing to be one with Him. The clinging to the Lord is again the result of loving Him from the heart, as the third precept says (verse 11). Love leads to the keeping of God's commandments (1Jn 5:3). Love brings to complete surrender and means life.

### **Verses 12-13 | Warning**

*12 For if you ever go back and cling to the rest of these nations, these which remain among you, and intermarry with them, so that you associate with them and they with you, 13 know with certainty that the LORD your God will not continue to drive these nations out from before you; but they will be a snare and a trap to you, and a whip on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from off this good land which the LORD your God has given you.*



There are always enemies remaining that they have to drive out and for whom they have to beware that they are not going to serve their gods. Those enemies always want to try to be among God's people. If they commit to it, it will have great and evil consequences. If they do not use God's power to drive out the enemy, God will allow the enemy to remain among them and they will not be able to drive him out.

David later subdues the enemies that are still in Israel. Thus, when the Lord Jesus returns to earth, He will subdue the enemies of Israel. We are part of professing Christianity and constantly have to deal with these enemies, the wolves from outside, which we no longer get rid of. We also have an enemy within us, that is the flesh. We should not fight against this, but keep ourselves dead to it (Rom 6:11).

If we do not treat the enemy as God indicates, he will be a "snare" that will bring us down. We will be caught in his "trap", which will prevent us from moving. He will become our "whip", which means he will oppress us hard and cruelly. Finally, he will become "thorns in your eyes", which means that he will cruelly and painfully blind us, so that we see nothing anymore of God's blessings.

#### **Verse 14 | The LORD Has Fulfilled All His Promises**

*14 "Now behold, today I am going the way of all the earth, and you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one word of all the good words which the LORD your God spoke concerning you has failed; all have been fulfilled for you, not one of them has failed.*

Joshua goes "the way of all the earth", that is, he leaves the earth by death. Enoch and Elijah are exceptions (Gen 5:24; 2Kgs 2:11). By emphasizing his death so emphatically, his words will have made an even greater impression.

Joshua honors God before the people by keeping God's absolute faithfulness to all His promises to the people (Jos 21:45; Heb 10:23b). He speaks of "all the good words". God seeks only the good for His people, all His promises are good and He fulfills them without exception. All the promises that have already been fulfilled are a guarantee for all the promises that remain to be fulfilled.

### Verses 15-16 | Consequences of Unfaithfulness Announced

*15 It shall come about that just as all the good words which the LORD your God spoke to you have come upon you, so the LORD will bring upon you all the threats, until He has destroyed you from off this good land which the LORD your God has given you. 16 When you transgress the covenant of the LORD your God, which He commanded you, and go and serve other gods and bow down to them, then the anger of the LORD will burn against you, and you will perish quickly from off the good land which He has given you."*

What applies to good things also applies to evil things. God is faithful to His Word in everything. Just as He has made good come, so He will also let evil come when His people become unfaithful to Him.

# Joshua 24

## Introduction

There is a wonderful structure in Joshua's speech. In verses 3-13 he presents to the people the great deeds of God. Many times we read there the word 'I', which refers to God. With Abraham the election of God comes to the fore. Through Moses and Aaron God shows that He is the Deliverer of the people. When He has brought the people into the land, He is the Conqueror of the enemies. Verse 13 rightly says: "I gave you a land."

After these words, the people are faced with the choice of who they want to serve. We are also faced with this choice, after all the blessings given to us in Christ have been recited to us. Is it a difficult choice?

All the people have said that they will serve the LORD, but very soon it appears what their words are worth. The book of Judges provides the proof. What remains then? A personal choice! Can we repeat Joshua with all our heart: "But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (verse 15b)?

## **Verse 1 | Joshua Gathers All the Tribes to Shechem**

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

After Joshua addressed the elders in the previous chapter, he wants to address the whole people. The whole people are close to his heart. He addresses them in Shechem. This is to consider a sanctuary, for there the LORD appeared to Abraham, and there Abraham built an altar to the LORD (Gen 12:6-7). There Jacob also built an altar (Gen 33:18-20) and there he buried all his idols (Gen 35:4).

History makes clear what the value of Shechem is. It is the right place for Joshua to present the history of God's people once again to the people. He does this by reminding the people of some great events. These events have a spiritual meaning and can be compared to Paul's service.

Paul speaks in his farewell speech about the four parts of his service:

1. “Solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21); this concerns the forgiveness of sins for unbelievers when they repent toward God and believe in the Lord Jesus.
2. “To testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24); this goes further than the call to repentance and is explained in the letter to the Romans.
3. The preaching of “the kingdom” (Acts 20:25); this is not the kingdom of peace, but that the rejected Christ is now in heaven and reigns as Lord over all who confess Him, Whose power becomes visible in the life of the Christian.
4. The declaration of “the whole purpose of God” (Acts 20:27); this is not what we find in the letter to the Romans, but in the letter to the Colossians and especially in the letter to the Ephesians, which deals with the counsel of God regarding the church.

These four parts are also found in Joshua’s speech.

### Verses 2-4 | Previous History

*2 Joshua said to all the people, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘From ancient times your fathers lived beyond the River, [namely], Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, and they served other gods. 3 Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River, and led him through all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his descendants and gave him Isaac. 4 To Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau, and to Esau I gave Mount Seir to possess it; but Jacob and his sons went down to Egypt.*

In the history of Abraham we find the truth of repentance and faith. He is called out of idolatry (1Thes 1:9). With him we see faith in the midst of all unbelief. By referring to Abraham’s idolatry Joshua points out that the idols are not only found around them, but that it is in their nature, in their hearts. We are also no better than the people around us. We used to belong to that company as well (Eph 2:3; Tit 3:3).

That God takes Abraham shows His election. Abraham is no better than his surroundings. God grants Isaac as the son in whom He will fulfill His

promises. He gives Jacob and Esau to Isaac. He gives Esau Mount Seir as an inheritance, so that the land of Canaan will be entirely for the descendants of Jacob.

### Verses 5-8 | What God Has Done for His People

*5 Then I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt by what I did in its midst; and afterward I brought you out. 6 I brought your fathers out of Egypt, and you came to the sea; and Egypt pursued your fathers with chariots and horsemen to the Red Sea. 7 But when they cried out to the LORD, He put darkness between you and the Egyptians, and brought the sea upon them and covered them; and your own eyes saw what I did in Egypt. And you lived in the wilderness for a long time. 8 Then I brought you into the land of the Amorites who lived beyond the Jordan, and they fought with you; and I gave them into your hand, and you took possession of their land when I destroyed them before you.*

In the deliverance of the people from Egypt we find the truth of redemption. This truth is found in the letter to the Romans, in which the gospel and righteousness are explained. Spiritually speaking, we are led to the plains of Moab. The wilderness journey is behind us. God has shown His faithfulness throughout the journey through the wilderness. We are now able to attack enemies and capture land.

### Verses 9-10 | Delivered From the Power of Balaam

*9 Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and fought against Israel, and he sent and summoned Balaam the son of Beor to curse you. 10 But I was not willing to listen to Balaam. So he had to bless you, and I delivered you from his hand.*

In these verses we find the third aspect of Joshua's service in comparison to Paul's. Once in the plains of Moab we hear in the blessing of Balaam about the kingship of the LORD and about the people of this King, who reigns supreme over a king like Balak (Num 23:21; 24:7,17). In the midst of God's people, the power of God's King, Who for us is our Lord, becomes visible. We rejoice because we go forward in the power of that King and take possession of things He has given us.

### Verses 11-13 | God Cleansed the Land for His People

*11 You crossed the Jordan and came to Jericho; and the citizens of Jericho fought against you, [and] the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Girgashite, the Hivite and the Jebusite. Thus I gave them into your hand. 12 Then I sent the hornet before you and it drove out the two kings of the Amorites from before you, [but] not by your sword or your bow. 13 I gave you a land on which you had not labored, and cities which you had not built, and you have lived in them; you are eating of vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant.'*

Here we have the fourth and last aspect of the comparison between the service of Joshua and the service of Paul. The land is captured, the enemy is driven out. This is what the LORD does for His people. All they may enjoy is a gift of His grace (Eph 2:8).

### Verses 14-15 | Call to Serve the LORD

*14 "Now, therefore, fear the LORD and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. 15 If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."*

All given blessings require a response. We also see this in the letters. After the blessings follows the exhortation to walk in accordance with them (Rom 12:1; Eph 4:1). If no choice is made for the LORD, it does not matter which idol they will serve. Again and again they are asked to make a choice (1Kgs 18:21; Rth 1:16; Mt 6:24). For Joshua the choice is clear. He is an old man, but still as militant as ever, here especially for his house.

If all the people will not participate in the faithful serving of the LORD, then it is certain for him that he and his house will serve the LORD. It applies to himself and to his children. The salvation is 'for those who believe and for their house'. This gospel the jailor hears from Paul's mouth: "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household" (Acts 16:31). Serving that follows salvation is also for 'me and my house-

hold'. The 'household of Stephanas' is a good example of this (1Cor 16:15). Let us follow the example of Joshua and Stephanas.

All blessings are not only for ourselves, but also for our children. Is it our wish that our children will enjoy the blessings we enjoy? Then we will take them to all kinds of meetings, so that they will learn to enjoy the blessings and not leave them at home while we visit those occasions ourselves.

### Verses 16-18 | We Will Serve the LORD

*16 The people answered and said, "Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods; 17 for the LORD our God is He who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and who did these great signs in our sight and preserved us through all the way in which we went and among all the peoples through whose midst we passed. 18 The LORD drove out from before us all the peoples, even the Amorites who lived in the land. We also will serve the LORD, for He is our God."*

Because the people still have the consciousness of the power of God Who blessed them, they declare that they want to serve the LORD alone. The reaction of the people sounds good, but Joshua cannot be deceived. He knows what is in their hearts. Therefore he seriously states to them that there is no strength in themselves. The people say they will serve the LORD, but it is like as at Sinai.

Have they removed the gods, as has been said several times in this chapter that they will do? Later it turns out that they did not do that. We cannot serve God in our own power. We should not promise anything, but beg God to help us serve Him. Nobody can say that everything in his life is in order.

### Verses 19-24 | Joshua Warns and the People Promise

*19 Then Joshua said to the people, "You will not be able to serve the LORD, for He is a holy God. He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgression or your sins. 20 If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and consume you after He has done good to you." 21 The people said to Joshua, "No, but we will serve the LORD." 22 Joshua said to the people, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen for*

*yourselves the LORD, to serve Him." And they said, "We are witnesses." 23 "Now therefore, put away the foreign gods which are in your midst, and incline your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel." 24 The people said to Joshua, "We will serve the LORD our God and we will obey His voice."*

Joshua does not mean to say that God is not a God of forgiveness. He wants to make it clear that God cannot be served with a halfhearted heart and that leaving Him to serve other gods is a serious sin. Such a sin shall end in disaster.

Joshua addresses the people four times about their responsibility. Each time the people answers that they will serve the LORD. Joshua asks them to prove their sincerity by putting away the strange gods.

### **Verses 25-27 | Joshua Makes a Covenant**

*25 So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made for them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem. 26 And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God; and he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak that was by the sanctuary of the LORD. 27 Joshua said to all the people, "Behold, this stone shall be for a witness against us, for it has heard all the words of the LORD which He spoke to us; thus it shall be for a witness against you, so that you do not deny your God."*

Joshua takes the promise of the people seriously. He writes "in the book of the law of God" what has been said. Then he sets up a large stone as a witness to the promises made by the people. When Joshua has passed away, the stone remains as a lasting reminder that God has heard everything.

Joshua writes in the book and sets up the stone as a witness "by the sanctuary of the LORD". This expression seems to indicate that Joshua brought the ark of the covenant from Shiloh to Shechem for this occasion.

### **Verse 28 | Joshua Dismisses the People**

*28 Then Joshua dismissed the people, each to his inheritance.*

Joshua dismisses the people. His service is coming to an end. With his last words in their ears they return to their inheritance. How long will his farewell speech resonate in their hearts and have its beneficial effect on the practice of their lives as people of God? The book of Judges gives the answer.



## Verses 29-30 | Death and Burial of Joshua

*29 It came about after these things that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being one hundred and ten years old. 30 And they buried him in the territory of his inheritance in Timnath-serah, which is in the hill country of Ephraim, on the north of Mount Gaash.*

The book ends with three burials. The first is that of Joshua. After a walk of faith in the wilderness and a battle of faith in the land he dies in faith in a better resurrection. He is called here for the first and also only time “the servant of the LORD”. With this, the Master puts in a simple way a significant mark of approval on his life. Can the Lord also say of us at the end of our lives: “Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master” (Mt 25:21)?

His grave is in his inheritance, in the hill country of Ephraim (Jos 19:50). The Ephraimites took possession of this by order of Joshua (Jos 17:14-18).

## Verse 31 | Israel Serves the LORD

*31 Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who survived Joshua, and had known all the deeds of the LORD which He had done for Israel.*

As long as the people have good examples, they serve the LORD (cf. 2Chr 24:2). We may well ask ourselves: do we live from a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus or do we merely follow the faith of others who teach us? When the witnesses of the power of the LORD and its influence on the people are gone, a new generation rises that is open to the influences of the peoples around them. The following book, Judges, shows this.

## Verse 32 | Joseph’s Bones Buried

*32 Now they buried the bones of Joseph, which the sons of Israel brought up from Egypt, at Shechem, in the piece of ground which Jacob had bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for one hundred pieces of money; and they became the inheritance of Joseph’s sons.*

The second burial is that of Joseph. The burial of Joseph’s bones makes it clear that the book does not really end with death, because it shows the

hope of the resurrection. With this in mind Joseph wanted his bones to be buried in the land (Heb 11:22).

### **Verse 33 | Death and Burial of Eleazar**

*33 And Eleazar the son of Aaron died; and they buried him at Gibeah of Phinehas his son, which was given him in the hill country of Ephraim.*

The third burial is that of Eleazar. The death and burial of Eleazar indicate that the service of this faithful high priest in connection with taking possession of the land is also coming to an end. In the next book a new time begins in which the people have no eye for this service.

When Christ, of whom Eleazar is a type, is forgotten, decay enters. Fortunately, then, God's sources have not dried up. In the judges He raises from time to time, He enables His people to enjoy His land again and again.



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