

NOTES AND QUESTIONS FOR INDUCTIVE STUDY IN THE BOOK OF JOSHUA

PART FOUR – CHAPTERS TEN TO TWENTY-FOUR – POSSESSING CHRIST

The major challenges of crossing the River Jordan, capturing Jericho, and recovering from the first defeat at Ai were settled. While there were still many battles to be fought, the people of Israel could now begin the process of settling their new country. The rest of the book describes the organisation and implementation of ‘putting the soles of their feet’,(1:3) on the land God had given them, but there are many spiritual messages in this story. They were possessing their possession,(Obadiah 17) as we by faith are to possess our possession as heirs of Christ.(Heb.10:34-36)

In chapter 10 the southern Canaanite tribes attempted to take revenge on Gibeon for going over to the enemy. God used Joshua to protect the Gibeonites who had once tricked him but were now accepted with God’s people. In chapter 11 it was the northern Canaanite people who tried to unite and drive the Israelites out but again God gave His people victory. Even some of the Anakim, the giants they once feared, were destroyed.(Num.13:33) The wars were over and it was time to claim their promised territory.

Chapter 12 is a complete list of 31 kings who had been defeated and whose land had been forfeited. In chapter 13 it was time for a stock take of the enemies still remaining particularly on the fringes of the country. The first to establish their claim to land were the two tribes, Reuben and Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh who had been promised land east of the Jordan, providing they helped their fellow Israelites take over the country west of the river, which they had now done. Put the whole body of Christ first and we will be richly blessed. Several times we are told that the Levites were not to have land because the Lord was their inheritance,(12:14,33) as we, the present day priests,(I Pet.2:9) find our inheritance in Christ, not real estate.

Chapter 14 continues explaining that the Levites would only receive cities with a small amount of surrounding land, spread through the whole country so that they could continue the spiritual care of the whole nation. The next tribe to be settled in chapter 15 was Judah but before the rest of the tribe were told where they would live, Caleb who had faithfully represented them as a spy in Numbers 13 was rewarded with his territory. Typically he chose a tough area inhabited by the giants others had said were too big for Israel but he had insisted in God’s strength they could handle. In chapter 15 the rest of Judah were now given their land which included Jerusalem. Caleb made good on his promise to get rid of the Anakim but first he offered his daughter in marriage to whichever man would lead the attack. Othniel was the winner. Achsah, the daughter, was as strong as her father and asked Caleb for a field and a good water supply to go with it. Othniel went on to become a leader in the next generation after Joshua.(Judg.3:9)

In chapter 16 the tribe of Ephraim were given their territory but there was a warning of problems to come, as there was at the end of the previous chapter,(15:18) of Canaanites not yet driven out who therefore remained as a threat in future. If we allow some of our old ways to linger as Christians without letting the Lord give us victory over them they have a way of

coming back to cause us problems. The descendants of Joseph were so numerous that they were counted as two tribes through Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. Part of the tribe of Manasseh had already been given land on the east of the Jordan. The rest of the tribe was now allotted land on the west bank in chapter 17. However they complained that this was not enough because they were so many. Joshua challenged them to be creative about the use of hill country forest rather than sitting back waiting for another comfortable valley to be handed to them. In Christ our problems become challenges to trust Him.(Phil.4:13)

Chapter 18 examines the situation with the remaining 7 tribes who were still unsettled and were waiting to be told where to go. They had lost momentum because they forgot Joshua's initial instruction to spread out through the land claiming territory simply by putting the soles of their feet on it. Joshua called them to provide three men from each tribe who would represent their tribe surveying the remaining land and dividing it into 7 portions. He would then cast lots to see which tribe got which portion. Again there was a reminder that the Levites were different in that the priesthood was their inheritance,(18:7) as we as Christians are heirs of Christ. The rest of this chapter and chapter 19 define the land given to each of these tribes. Last of all Joshua himself was given his territory. The first willingly put himself last as Jesus did to serve us.(Lk.13:30)

In chapter 20 Joshua was told to implement a provision for a refuge for anyone who killed someone accidentally and might otherwise have been killed in revenge by the family. Certain cities were designated as places of safety. The offender could stay there until the current high priest died after which his offence was considered cancelled and he could return to his community. The death of our High Priest set all of us free from the guilt of sin whether intentional or not.(Heb.9:28) Chapter 21 fulfilled the promise of cities for the Levites who were to be spread though all 12 tribes so that they could minister to them where they were. Jesus sent us into all the world to preach the gospel rather than demanding that people needing Him come to us.(Mk.16:15) No promise of God had failed.

In chapter 22 Joshua and the high priest had to resolve a threat to the unity of Israel which resulted from misunderstanding about an altar built by the 2 ½ eastern tribes. Was it an alternative to the tabernacle or was it simply a witness to their trust in the one God? In Christ, differences need to be settled openly and quickly before damage is done.(Eph.4:1-3) In chapter 23 Joshua reminded Israel of the secret of their possession of the land and how to hold on to it. All they had to do was to hold on to His word and to God as their only God. A good example would be in our marriages,(v.12) so don't marry an unbeliever!(II Cor.6:14) Forget God and they would lose it all. In chapter 24 Joshua gathered the entire nation together for the last time. First he gave them a summary of their history from the time of Abraham, reminding them that victory and fulfilment had always depended on whether they trusted God alone. Once more Joshua and the people committed themselves to the Lord. Joshua died at the age of 110 after 70 fruitful, faithful years of ministry, first under Moses and now alone. What a man! What a Saviour!

FINAL ASSIGNMENT Review each chapter in the book of Joshua noting the lessons on victory and defeat which apply to us today. Which one speaks loudest to you?