**Exploring God’s Word – Week #17**

**JOSHUA 19 THROUGH JUDGES 6**

**JOSHUA 19**

The tribes of Simeon, Zebulun, Issachar, Asher, Naphtali and Dan received their specific allotment.  Joshua got a special piece of land. **Joshua saw to it that the distribution to the tribes was completed before he received his own inheritance (19:49–50). The city of Timnath was located in a mountainous region where life would not be easy. Joshua could have chosen the finest place in the land, but he put others first and let them take the best (1 Cor. 10:24; Phil. 2:1–4).**

**JOSHUA 20**

The purpose of the cities of refuge was described as places where someone can go if they caused an accidental death.  The accused can run to the city, plead their case before the leaders then be tried before the victim’s family can get revenge. **Jesus Christ is our “city of refuge” (Heb. 6:18–20), but the salvation He gives is in contrast to the refuge given to the manslayer. It is true that the sinner must come to Christ but it is also true that Christ first comes to us (Luke 19:10). When we come to Christ, there is no trial to determine our guilt. We know we are guilty! That is why we fled to Him! We did not stand at the door and wait; we entered the open door (John 10:9) and were welcomed by the Savior, knowing that we would never face condemnation (John 5:24; Rom. 8:1). The manslayer had to remain in the city, but we “go in and out and find pasture” (John 10:9).**

**JOSHUA 21**

Each tribe gave the Levites designated cities.  Each clan in the Levites (Gershon, Kohathite, Merari) received their own allotment.  A total number of 48 cities were given to the Levites. **God kept His promise and gave the land to Israel (v. 43). He had promised it first to Abraham (Gen. 13:14–17), and then to his descendants (Gen. 17:8). On the basis of that promise, Joshua entered Canaan, defeated the enemy, and claimed the land for Israel. God kept His promise and gave them rest from war, enabling them to conquer all their enemies and enjoy their inheritance (v. 44). We have spiritual rest today through Christ (Heb. 3–4) and will one day enter into eternal rest.**

**JOSHUA 22**

Reubenites, Gadites and the half tribe of Manasseh were dismissed from their promise to help the other tribes occupy the land west of the Jordan.  But when they arrived home, the three tribes built an altar that made the other tribes think they were separating from them.  A delegation arrived before war broke out and the three tribes said they built the altar as a memorial, not a substitute or an act of separation.  They wanted their descendants to know that they worship the same God as their brothers on the other side of the Jordan.  Satisfied, the tribes backed down. number of 48 cities were given to the Levites. They wanted their descendants to know that they worship the same God as their brothers on the other side of the Jordan.  Satisfied, the tribes backed down. **The land was at rest, but the eastern tribes were restless because the Jordan River separated them from their brethren. Would their children grow up and think they were not truly Israelites? They should have considered that when they set the boundary! The building of the altar was at first misunderstood as a declaration of war, but then it became a witness of peace and unity. It is too bad when God’s people are forced to manufacture evidence to bear witness of their unity. Before you declare war on the brethren, stop to find out what is going on. Maybe you agree after all! Ponder Proverbs 18:13 and James 3:13–18.**

**JOSHUA 23**

Joshua, now old, gave final instructions, imploring the people to follow God’s commandments or be destroyed.  He reminded them that God faithfully kept every promise. **Like his predecessor Moses, Joshua gave a farewell address, first to his leaders (chap. 23) and then to the people as a whole (chap. 24). He magnified the Lord and not himself. No one would question that Joshua was a gifted leader and a great general, but he gave the glory to God. He challenged the people to keep trusting God and claiming their inheritance. In the book of Judges, we discover how their incomplete obedience led to compromise and severe discipline from the Lord. Joshua had warned them (v. 16), but they forgot his words. Triumph was turned into tragedy. He reminded them that God’s Word never fails (v. 14) and must be obeyed completely if God is to continue His blessing on the land. Verse 7 explains how to wander from the Lord, and the nation did exactly that!**

**JOSHUA 24**

Joshua’s final words reminded the Israelites what God had done from Abraham through Moses.  He made them promise to be faithful to God and God alone.  The people swore they would.  Joshua died and was buried.  Joseph’s bones were also buried.  Eleazar the priest also died. **Joshua reviewed the history of Israel and reminded the people of God’s grace and goodness in calling Abraham, delivering Israel from Egypt, and giving them their land. It is good to review the past and remember the mercies of the Lord. Sincerity. Our God is “a jealous God” in that He will not tolerate rivals. He will not be one of several gods in our lives; He must be Lord of all. Everybody serves some god, and if it is not the true God as revealed in Jesus Christ, it is a false god. Joshua issued the challenge: “Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve!” (v. 15).**

**JUDGES 1**

A summary of events after Joshua died.  Judah attacked the Canaanites first, capturing Jerusalem, then moving to other towns.  Othniel, Caleb’s nephew, conquered Kiriath-sepher and received Caleb’s daughter in return.  All the tribes failed to drive out all the former inhabitants, so their influence continued during occupation. **After the death of Joshua and the move of the two and a half tribes to the east of the Jordan, the nation did not function as one great army. Individual tribes fought to claim their inheritance, and often the tribes worked together; but something was definitely lost in the transition. God’s people must endeavor “to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3). What began with conquest (vv. 1–26) soon became compromise (vv. 27–36) as the defeated tribes gave in to the enemy.**

**JUDGES 2**

An angel came to the people at Bokim and pointed out their disobedience by making covenants with the enemies and not destroying their altars.  Joshua died and the people began worshipping other gods.  God got angry but raised up judges who saved the people, until they fell back into their old patterns. **The older generation failed to teach the younger generation God’s truth as Moses had commanded them (Deut. 6:1–9). It is bad enough that they forgot Joshua, their second greatest leader, but how could they forget the Lord? You will find the explanation in Deuteronomy 8. In their relationship with God, the next generation, and their neighbors, Israel failed.**

**JUDGES 3**

Certain nations, including the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Jebusites and others were left to live in Israel, tempting the Israelites.  Othniel defeated the king of Aram giving Israel peace for forty years.  When the Moabites attacked Israel and took over Jericho, the Israelites were subject to King Moab for eight years. **The presence of the enemy in the land was an opportunity for teaching, testing, and trusting. The younger generation could learn how to fight, and that would keep them from taking their inheritance for granted. God could test His people and encourage them to trust Him for victory. Even though the tribes had failed to drive out the enemy, God was still with His people and wanted to help them. God’s people must live in the world, but they must not live like the world. Israel forgot the Lord and adopted the ways of the enemy. It began with intermarriage, which led to the worship of idols.**

**JUDGES 4**

The society of that day was strongly masculine, so it was humiliating when women had leadership in the land (Isa. 3:12). The pages of church history record the names of godly women like Deborah who knew God’s will, rallied God’s people, and won God’s victories; and we are grateful for them. In Hebrews 11:32, Barak is named as a man of faith, but Deborah enlisted him and saved the day. **What a strange victory! God used two women, a jug of milk, a hammer, a tent peg, and a storm (Judges 5:4–5, 20–21) to defeat the enemy! (See 1 Cor. 1:26–29.) One person’s faith and obedience can make a difference in history. Whether you are a leader like Deborah or a follower like Barak, be sure to be a believer; because faith makes the difference between defeat and victory.**

**JUDGES 5**

Deborah and Barak sang a song of victory, giving more details about the defeat of Sisera and King Jabin.  The nation had peace for forty years. **Deborah and Barak cooperated in fighting the battle and also in praising the Lord (Ps. 149:6). Their song reveals some truths about our spiritual warfare in this world. Be willing to fight (2, 9). Leaders cannot lead unless soldiers are willing to obey. Are you a willing soldier? Know that the Lord goes before you (4–5, 31). The God of history can help you do exploits for Him today if you will trust Him and do His will. He is able! Do not let others discourage you (13–18, 23).**

**JUDGES 6**

The Midianites used to ravage the land during harvest, stealing all the livestock and crops.  The Israelites would hide in the mountains for defense.  God called Gideon to destroy the Midianites.  An angel delivered the message and proved it was God by setting his offering ablaze.  Gideon knocked down the altar of Baal and the Asherah pole.  The town wasn’t happy.  Gideon’s dad told them to let Baal defend himself.  Gideon then asked for one more sign from the Lord – he set out a fleece and asked it to be wet and the ground dry.  After it happened the next morning, he asked for the fleece to be dry and the ground wet.  It too was so. **Gideon was an unlikely candidate for God’s “Hall of Fame” (Heb. 11:32). When God called him, he was hiding. When God spoke to him, he raised problems instead of trusting promises. One of his favorite words was if (vv. 13, 17, 36; Mark 9:22–23). When Gideon did start to obey God, he worked at night (v. 27) and had to have repeated reassurance that the Lord was with him. But God saw the potential in Gideon and even called him a “mighty man of valor” (v. 12). God sees the potential in you and says to you as He did to Simon, “You are . . . You shall be” (John 1:42). He knows your weaknesses and will accommodate Himself to your needs so that He might develop your faith.**

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