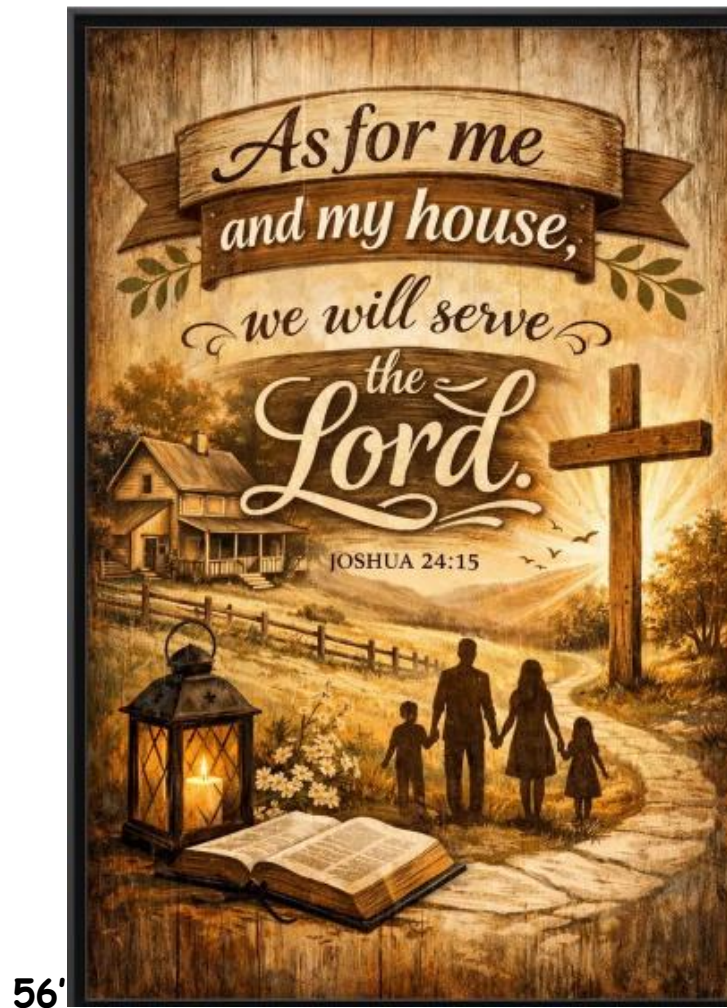




Joshua Chapters 21 to 24 – 5 more Studies – Part 5

Please Note the following:

1. It is not necessary to answer the Bible Study Questions before meeting together for the Bible Study. Some people like to prepare beforehand whereas others like to think through the Bible Passages in a group setting. It is also not compulsory to answer ALL the questions.
2. It is not necessary to look up all the Bible cross references listed in a particular question; your Growth Group Leader will summarize these Bible cross references for you.
3. Just a reminder that sometimes in our Growth Groups, people feel comfortable sharing very personal and sensitive things about their lives. This information **MUST BE CONFIDENTIAL** and **NEVER LEAVE THE GROUP**

Study 1 – God’s Promises Never Fail

Joshua 21:1-45

(Sermon on 2nd August 2026)

Before we begin...

Who are the Levites?

The Levites are members of the tribe of Levi, one of the tribes of Israel. Levi was one of Jacob’s twelve sons!

God set them apart to look after the Tabernacle (mobile Temple) and to assist the Priests, and lead the people in worship.

Moses and Aaron both come from the tribe of Levi. Hence Aaron was the first High Priest of Israel.

There duties and roles

- **Tabernacle Care:** Packed, moved, and set up the portable sanctuary during the wilderness travels.
- **Assisting Priests:** Helped Aaron's descendants, who performed the direct animal sacrifices.
- **Temple Support:** Served as musicians, gatekeepers, guards, and judges for the community

Read Joshua 21:1-45

1. Why is Shiloh important? (v1)

*Shiloh means “**a place of rest**”.*

The city was situated in Ephraim and it was a temporary home of the Ark of the Covenant and the Tabernacle.

It was later the place where Hannah prayed deeply for a child (1 Samuel) and where her son, the prophet Samuel grew up.

It’s also the place where the Philistines captured the Ark of the Covenant during a battle due to the corruption of Eli’s sons.

Twelve Tribes

Joshua 13-22

1400 BC

6 City-State Empires in 1406 BC

Amorite 15 city state Basham empire
King Jabin at Hazor
Hazor, Madon, Shimron, Achshaph, Dor:
Joshua 11:1-3,10; Judges 4:2

Amorite 60 city states Bashan empire
King Og of Bashan at Ashtaroth:
Deut 3:4; 4:47; Josh 12:4-5; 13:30-31; Neh 9:22;

Shechem/Shiloh city state empire
Being Hebrew friendly & joined Joshua
is confirmed in Amarna Letters below:
Shechem: Amarna Letters: EA246, 254, 244, 289
Shiloh: Amarna letter: EA288

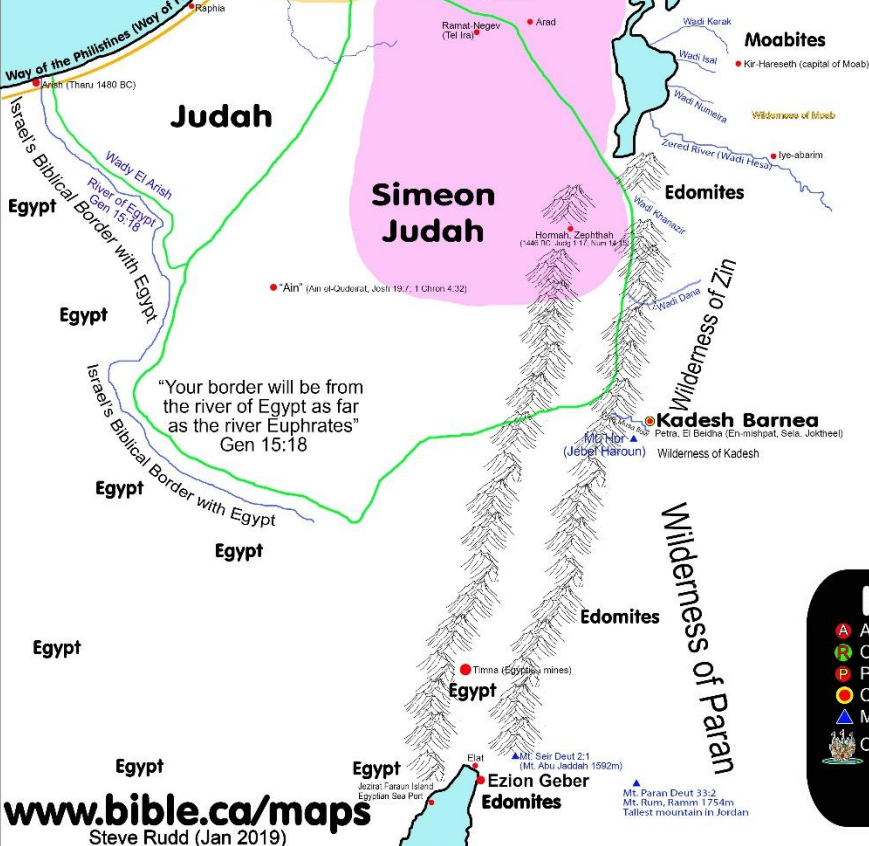
Amorite city state empire
King Shihon at Heshbon:
Deut 4:47; Josh 12:2; 13:27; Neh 9:22;

Amorite Pentapolis of 112 city states
In hill country (Jerusalem is capital)
Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, Egion:
Josh 10:5

Philistine Pentapolis of city states
in coastal plain (Ashkelon is capital)
Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath, Ekron:
Ex 13:17-18; Deut 2:23;
Josh 11:22; 13:2-3;
Judges 1:18-19; 3:1-3

Philistine Pentapolis Coastal Plain Empire 1446-1356 BC
Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath, Ekron:
Ex 13:17-18; Deut 2:23;
Josh 11:22; 13:2-3;
Judges 1:18-19; 3:1-3

Amorite Pentapolis Hill Country Empire of 112 city states 1406 BC
Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, Egion:
Josh 10:5



Key

- Amorite capital city 1406 BC
- City of Refuge
- Philistine occupation
- City of special significance
- ▲ Mountain
- ★ Capital city of Israel

Scale
20 km

2. Why were the Levites not given a tribal territory like other tribes? (Numbers 18:20-24; Joshua 13:33)

Back in Genesis 34 – Simeon and Levi – had taken revenge on the man who had raped their sister, Dinah.

*So in Genesis 49, as Jacob died, he gave blessings to all his sons, but to Simeon and Levi, he said this: ⁵ “Simeon and Levi are brothers— their swords are weapons of violence.⁶ Let me not enter their council, let me not join their assembly, for they have killed men in their anger and hamstringed oxen as they pleased. ⁷ Cursed be their anger, so fierce, and their fury, so cruel! **I will scatter them in Jacob and disperse them in Israel.***

*By the time we get to Joshua’s time and beyond – **Simeon’s land is swallowed up by Judah (Joshua 19:1, 9)** and the Levites are scattered throughout Israel.*

*Numbers 18:20-24 – ²⁰ The Lord said to Aaron, “**You will have no inheritance in their land, nor will you have any share among them; I am your share and your inheritance among the Israelites.** ²¹ “I give to the Levites all the tithes in Israel as their inheritance in return for the work they do while serving at the tent of meeting. ²² From now on the Israelites must not go near the tent of meeting, or they will bear the consequences of their sin and will die. ²³ **It is the Levites who are to do the work at the tent of meeting and bear the responsibility for any offenses they commit against it.** This is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. **They will receive no inheritance among the Israelites.** ²⁴ Instead, I give to the Levites as their inheritance the tithes that the Israelites present as an offering to the Lord. That is why I said concerning them: ‘**They will have no inheritance among the Israelites.**’”*

*Joshua 13:33 – But to the tribe of Levi, Moses had **given no inheritance; the Lord, the God of Israel, is their inheritance**, as he promised them.*

*See also Joshua 13:14 – But to the tribe of Levi **he gave no inheritance, since the food offerings presented to the Lord, the God of Israel, are their inheritance**, as he promised them.*

3. What are the family heads of the Levites proposing and what is the basis of their proposal? (vv1-2)

They came to Eleazar the priest and Joshua and the heads of the tribes and remind them that “The Lord commanded through Moses that you give us towns to live in, with pasturelands for our livestock” (Numbers 35:2-3) and so the Israelites did as God commanded and gave the Levites the towns and pasturelands listed in the rest of this chapter.

John Calvin’s view on the Lord’s Prayer is that God sets forth a table that allows us to seek of Him, all that is of benefit to us, all that we need ask... We are asking almost in God’s own words.

James 1:5 assures us that if we lack wisdom to know how to respond to and act in our trials (vv2-4), we should ask God for it in faith, and the giving God will give it to us. Perhaps the Levites can teach us to pray.

4. What were the outcomes of this proposal? (vv3-40)

*Joshua 21:3-4 shows the towns given to the Levites into **three main family groups** (with the priests as a subset of one of them):*

1. **The Kohathites (Priests – descendants of Aaron)** (vv. 4, 9–19). They received **13 towns** from the tribes of **Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin**. As Aaron’s descendants, they served as the priests who offered sacrifices and ministered at the tabernacle.
2. **The Remaining Kohathites** (vv. 5, 20–26) The other Kohathite clans received **10 towns** from the tribes of **Ephraim, Dan, and the half-tribe of Manasseh (west of the Jordan)**. They assisted the priests with the care and transport of the tabernacle and its furnishings.
3. **The Gershonites and Merarites** (vv. 6–7, 27–40)
 - The **Gershonites** received **13 towns** from **Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, and the half-tribe of Manasseh (east of the Jordan)** (vv. 27–33).
 - The **Merarites** received **12 towns** from **Reuben, Gad, and Zebulun** (vv. 34–40). These clans also had important responsibilities in transporting, maintaining, and serving the tabernacle.

The Israelites obeyed the Lord and gave the Levites towns and surrounding pasturelands from their own tribal inheritances, just as God had commanded through

Moses. In total, the Levites received 48 towns, ensuring they were dispersed throughout Israel to teach God's law and lead His worship (Joshua 21:3–40).



5. Why do you think God scattered the Levites throughout all Israel rather than placing them in one area?
 - *Placing Levites in every region ensured that every tribe had teachers to guide them in God's laws and worship.*
 - *The Cities of Refuge were also Levite towns and as these were spaced out, it made it easy for anyone accused of accidental manslaughter to quickly reach a safe place for a fair trial.*
 - *Keeping the Levites separate with no land of their own, prevented them from forming a strong, greedy, or unified political state that could control the other tribes.*
 - *It also fulfilled Jacob's prophecy and blessing from Genesis 49:5-7*
6. **Ponder:** What does the arrangement of the Levites teach us about the importance of worship, teaching God's Word, and spiritual leadership among His people?

- *God's Word and worship was central to Israel's life*
- *God intended His Word was to be taught everywhere*
- *God intended His people to influence one another spiritually. Iron sharpens iron (Proverbs 27:17)*
- *He showed the Levites and the other tribes, that their greatest inheritance is God!*

For Christians today, these arrangements for the Levites highlight the importance of:

- *Making worship and God's Word central to church life.*
- *Supporting ministers, missionaries, and other gospel workers.*
- *Ensuring faithful biblical teaching is available to all God's people.*
- *Recognizing that our greatest inheritance is not earthly possessions but the Lord Himself through Jesus Christ.*

7 What has God done for Israel? (vv43-45)

*V43 – He has given them all the **land** He swore to their ancestors and they have taken possession of it and settle in it*

*V44 – He has given them **rest** on all sides. Not one enemy has stood against them; the Lord has given them **victory** over all their enemies.*

*V45 – Not one of God's promises to Israel has failed! **Every promise has been fulfilled.***

7. What does verse 44 tells us about Israel's enemies and God's protection?

V44 – tells us that the battle belongs to the Lord, so every enemy was defeated because they had God's protection all the way through!

*This is the same pattern in the New Testament, the Apostle Paul comforts believers suffering persecution by promising that **God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you 7 and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. 8 He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might (2 Thessalonians 1:6-9)***

8. What promises has God made earlier in the Old Testament? (cf. Genesis 12:7; Genesis 15:18-21; Exodus 3:8; Deuteronomy 7:7-9)

*Genesis 12:7 – The Lord appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring **I will give this land.**” So he built an altar there to the Lord, who had appeared to him.*

*Genesis 15:18-21 – ¹⁸ On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram and said, “**To your descendants I give this land**, from the Wadi of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates— ¹⁹ the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites ²⁰ Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, ²¹ Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites.”*

*Exodus 3:8 – So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into **a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey**—the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites.*

*Deuteronomy 7:7-9 - ⁷ The Lord did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. ⁸ **But it was because the Lord loved you and kept the oath he swore to your ancestors that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery**, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. ⁹ Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments.*

9. **Reflection:** Which promise of God has encouraged you in difficult times in your life?

*Romans 8:31 - What, then, shall we say in response to these things? **If God is for us, who can be against us?***

*Joshua 1:9 - Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, **for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.**”*

*Micah 7:7 - But as for me, I watch in hope for the Lord, I wait for God my Savior; **my God will hear me.***

10. **Reflection:** Are there areas in your life where you struggle to trust God's promises?

The main area is although I know God is in the miracle business and He has performed many miracles in my life and answered my prayers for others with miracles; I still struggle that He is going to answer this time. So I find myself saying "I do believe, help me overcome unbelief!" (Mark 9:24)

The other area is connected; and that is waiting for God to answer even though I know I am praying according to His will and His promises in His Word.

11. How is remembering God's past promises and faithfulness helpful?

Remembering God's past promises and faithfulness can be helpful:

- *It strengthens our faith as we face uncertainty and trials*
- *It encourages us to obedient knowing God always keeps His promises*
- *It gives us gratitude for the past and hope for the future*
- *If we think about, if God has done the BIG thing – and sent His Son to save us – is He then going to leave us and not care about the details in our lives also.*

12. How can we/our church be like the Levites?

Just like the Levites were scattered through the Israelite community, we as a church are to be scattered throughout the community; we are to be:

- *Like the Levites, we can be **care-takers for God's Word***
- *Teaching God's Word faithfully – helping others to have a saving knowledge of Jesus and to grow in their knowledge of God*
- *Leading people in prayer and worship*
- *Providing spiritual care – praying for and encourage one another*
- *Fulfilling the Great Commission – and being Jesus' witnesses at work, at school, and neighbourhoods*
- *As we said last week, the Church is a place of refuge like the cities of refuge!*
- *The Levites were servants of the rest of Israel, just as the Church leaders are meant to be servants to the wider church and community*

- *The Levites were responsible for the sacrifices in the Temple; as Christians we are to offer our bodies as living sacrifices (Romans 12:1)*

Where is **JESUS** in **Joshua 21:1-45**?

- *Just like the Levites are the priestly tribe fulfilling the duties of worship and sacrifices for sin on behalf of the people – **Jesus is not only the Great High Priest but He is the sacrifice (once and for all) for sin***
- *The name Shiloh [Place of Rest] is a **prophetic title for the Messiah**, Jesus. He bring us true refuge and rest for our souls as we discovered last week.*
- *The Levites received no land as inheritance – the Lord was their inheritance. Likewise is our greater inheritance. Through Jesus' death and resurrection we have an eternal inheritance*
- *The Levites were scattered to ensure they were a spiritual influence on all of Israel; Jesus send His disciples and us to all nations, to be a spiritual influence and share the Good News of the Gospel and to make God/Jesus known.*
- *The chapter ends with "Not one of all the Lord's promises to Israel failed; every one was fulfilled". This points to its fulfilment in Jesus, because all of God's promises find their "Yes" in Jesus (2 Corinthians 1:20)*
- *The Israelites experience rest in v44. When Jesus returns we will have the ultimate eternal rest*

13. How do the following passages relate to **Joshua 21:1-45**?

Isaiah 55: 8-13

In Isaiah 55 God promises that His word will not return to Him void but will always accomplish His purposes because His ways are higher than our ways and His thoughts higher than our thoughts.

In Joshua 21 all the promises of land inheritance and blessings to the Israelites, even though made centuries earlier, still were fulfilled in God's own perfect higher way and in God's own perfect higher timing!

Isaiah 55 says the land will flourish and that's precisely what is happening in Joshua 21.

Numbers 35:1-8

In Numbers 35:1-8 God commanded Moses that the Levites should receive towns among the other tribes because they would have no tribal territory of their own. In Joshua 21 this promise/command was fulfilled. It also shows that God thinks of everything and always provides for His people!

2 Corinthians 1:12-24

*In 2 Corinthians 1:12-24, Paul explains that God is faithful and that His promises are certain, because **“all the promises of God find their Yes in Him [Christ]”** (v.20). Joshua 21:45 declares that not one of God’s promises failed. This points forward to Jesus, in whom every promise of God finds its ultimate fulfilment.*

Ephesians 1:13-14

*In Ephesians 1, Paul says believers receive the Holy Spirit as **a guarantee of their inheritance** until we receive the full possession of what God has promised. Likewise the Levites received their inheritance as the Lord, rather than a large piece of land (Joshua 13:33). For us, we have an inheritance in Jesus, guaranteed by the Holy Spirit.*

Hebrews 10:19-25 (especially verse 23)

*In Joshua 21, the Israelites could trust God because He faithfully fulfilled all His promises. Christians can have even greater confidence because Jesus has opened the way to God and God remains faithful. Therefore in Hebrews 10:23 the writer says **““hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.”***

The Levites were scattered throughout the Land, so there is no excuse for not gathering together in worship; just like Hebrews tells us we have no excuse for not gathering together in worship.

1 Peter 2: 4-10

In Joshua 21, the Levites were set apart for God’s service and worship among Israel. This points forward to where Peter describes all Christians as living stones being built into a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, and God’s chosen people. We

are to be His priests, called to serve God, proclaim His goodness, share the Good News and represent Him in the world.

2 Peter 1:3-4

Peter says God has given believers everything needed for life and godliness and has given us His precious promises so we may share in His divine nature. In Joshua 21, God provided everything Israel needed — land, rest, and spiritual leadership through the Levites. In Christ, God has provided everything needed for our spiritual life and growth; so that we can live a Godly life for God's glory!

Revelation 1:4-6

Revelation 1:4-6 says Jesus has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen. The Levites were a priestly tribe serving God among His people. Jesus fulfils and expands this idea by making all His people a kingdom of priests who worship and serve Him.

What's the **BIG IDEA** of Joshua 21:1-45?

God keeps His promises and provides all His people need.



What light globe moment did you have?

What **questions** do you have about the passages in this study?

Share the verse that had a special meaning to you in this study?

⁴⁵ **Not one of all the Lord's good promises to Israel failed; every one was fulfilled.**

Finish in prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank you for your faithfulness in all your promises. Thank you for your specific promises and arrangements for the Levites which foreshadow our role as a holy priesthood under our great High Priest, Jesus. Help us to be faithful priests in sharing the Good News of our Lord Jesus. Thank you that all your promises are Yes in our Lord Jesus. In His Name, we pray. Amen.

Study 2 – Joshua’s Five Challenges

Joshua 22:1-34

(Sermon on 9th August 2026)

Before we begin, read Numbers 32:1-32...

This passage gives **background** to the **Eastern Tribes**. Summarize what is going on. *Numbers 32 tells how the tribes of Reuben and Gad asked Moses for land east of the Jordan River because they had large numbers of livestock and saw that the land of Gilead was ideal for their animals.*

1. Reuben and Gad make their request (vv. 1–5)

Reuben and Gad approached Moses and said that the land east of the Jordan was excellent for livestock. They asked to settle there rather than receive their inheritance in Canaan.

2. Moses is concerned (vv. 6–15)

Moses initially reacted strongly. He feared that Reuben and Gad were discouraging the other Israelites from entering the Promised Land. He reminded them of what happened when the spies returned from Kadesh-Barnea: Israel became afraid and refused to enter Canaan. Moses warned that their actions could bring God's anger upon the whole nation.

3. They offer to fight with Israel (vv. 16–27)

Reuben and Gad clarified that they were not refusing to fight.

They promised: Their families and livestock would remain in the fortified towns east of the Jordan. Their fighting men would cross the Jordan with the other tribes. They would fight until Israel had taken possession of its inheritance. Only after the other tribes had received their land would they return to their own territory.

This reassured Moses.

4. Moses agrees — with a condition (vv. 28–32)

Moses agreed to give them the land of Gilead provided they kept their promise to fight alongside Israel.

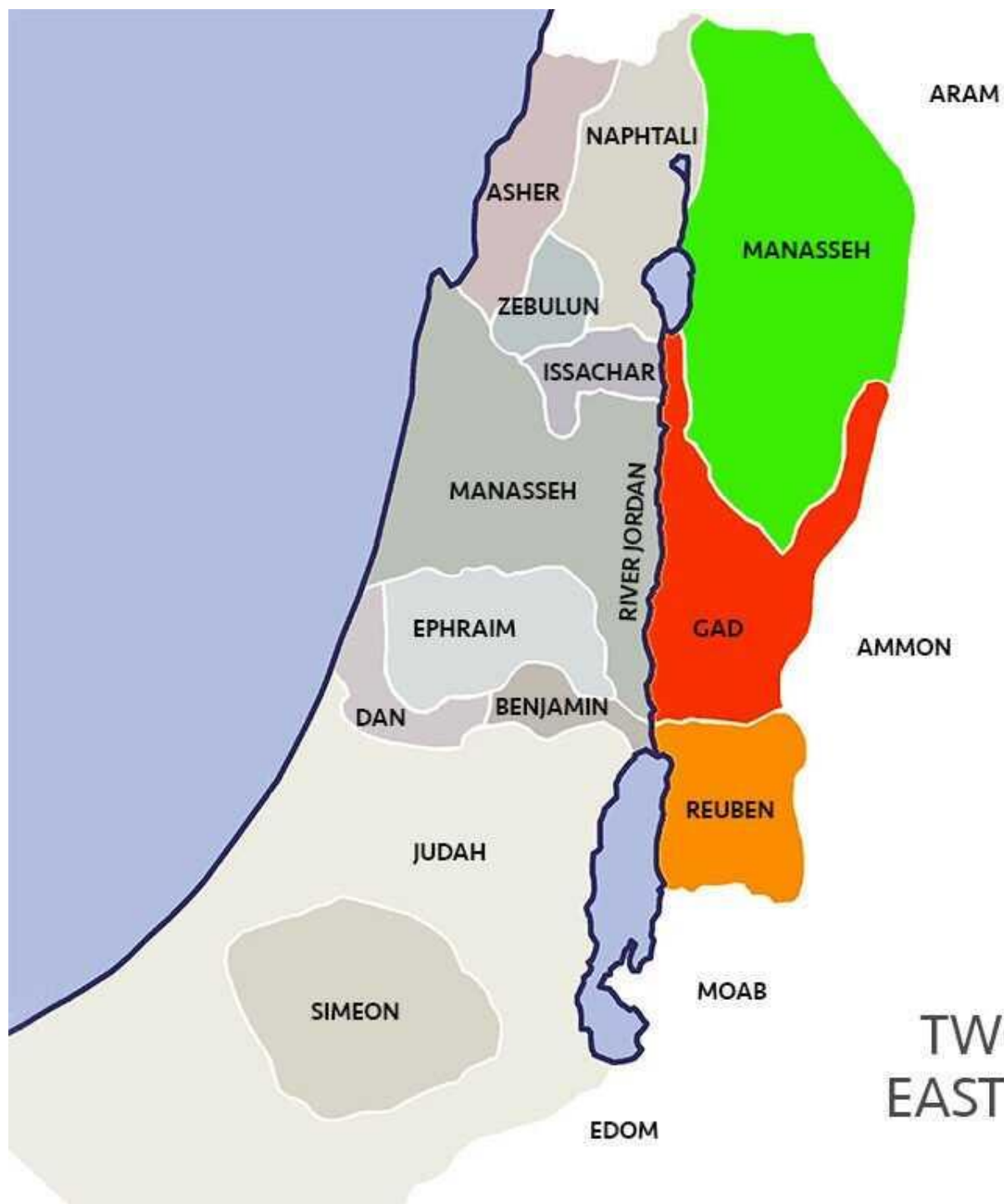
Their inheritance would therefore be conditional upon their faithfulness and obedience.

5. The land is divided (vv. 33–42)

*Moses gave the territory east of the Jordan to: **Reuben; Gad and Half the tribe of Manasseh***

They built or fortified towns and settled the land.

Numbers 32 raises an important question about God's people putting the interests of others before their own.



TWO-AND-A-HALF TRIBES
EAST OF THE RIVER JORDAN

Read Joshua 22:1-5

1. What does Joshua commend the Eastern tribes for? (vv1-3)

Joshua commends the faithfulness of the Eastern tribes. He tells them: “You have done all that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded, and you have obeyed me in everything I commanded. For a long time now—to this very day—you have not deserted your fellow Israelites but have carried out the mission the Lord your God gave you”

In the seven years they had been with Joshua, helping the tribes west of the Jordan to conquer their enemies, they had been completely obedient and helpful to Joshua (Guzik)

2. What instructions does Joshua give the Eastern tribes? (v4)

Joshua tells them to “return to your homes in the land that Moses the servant of the Lord gave you on the other side of the Jordan”

3. In verse 5, Joshua gives the Eastern tribes five challenges; list them.

- i) *To be very careful to **keep the commandment and the law** that Moses the servant of the Lord gave you*
- ii) *to **love the Lord your God***
- iii) *to **walk in obedience to him, to keep his commands***
- iv) *to **hold fast to the Lord***
- v) *to **serve God with all your heart and with all your soul.***

We should not miss the order here. First, we should take care to hear God. Then we give Him our love. Next comes a walk of obedience. To mix this order up is to drift into heresy (loving without hearing) or legalism (obeying before loving). [Guzik]

Read Joshua 22:6-9

4. Summarize what Joshua and the Eastern tribes do in these verses.

Joshua blessed them and sent them away (v6)

Half of tribe of Manasseh had land given to them on the Eastern side from Moses and the other half of tribe of Manasseh had land given to them on the Western side from Joshua (v7)

Joshua blessed them saying: “Return to your homes with your great wealth—with large herds of livestock, with silver, gold, bronze and iron, and a great quantity of clothing—and divide the plunder from your enemies with your fellow Israelites” (vv7-8)

Joshua would not send them away without a blessing. He knew that they could not do or be what God wanted them to be without His blessing among them.

Perhaps he used the blessing from Numbers 6:23-27: Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, ‘This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel. Say to them: “The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.”’ So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them. [Guzik]

The Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh left the Israelites at Shiloh in Canaan to return to Gilead, their own land – given to them by Moses.

We might imagine that this was a somewhat emotional departure of brothers who had known the closeness of fighting side-by-side. These were true veterans of the army of Israel. [Guzik]

Read Joshua 22:10-34

5. What did the Eastern tribes build? (v10)

They built an imposing altar there by the River Jordan!

This was significant not only because of its size, but because of the meaning of an altar. An altar was a place of sacrifice, and both the Israelites and pagans had altars they used for sacrifice. [Guzik]

6. How did the rest of the Israelites (Western tribes) react? (vv11-12)

The whole assembly of Israel gathered at Shiloh to go to war against the Eastern tribes (v11).

When the news came to the rest of Israel, there was no discussion, there was a simple reaction. They gathered to make war against their own brothers who built this altar. Notice that Joshua did not need to gather them, they gathered of their own accord. It was an automatic reaction. Why did they do this? Because they feared that this altar was a sign of allegiance to the pagan gods of the region. Their readiness to fight this

battle shows great courage to confront on behalf of God's truth and holiness. This was a healthy "body," able to purge itself of poisons. [Guzik]

7. Whom do they send to handle this situation? (vv13-14)

*The Israelites sent **Phinehas** son of Eleazar, the priest, to the land of Gilead—to Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh. With him they sent **ten of the chief men, one from each of the tribes of Israel**, each the head of a family division among the Israelite clans.*

***Phinehas** led the group because he had the authority. He was high priest over the whole nation, including the two and one-half tribes on the east side of the Jordan. He not only had the authority, but he also had the heart of a wise shepherd. He wanted to correct the erring, to protect the nation, and to drive out the dangerous. [Guzik]*

8. What might the Western Tribes have been concerned about regarding this altar? What previous sins do they recall? (vv15-20) (cf. Deuteronomy 12:5-14; Leviticus 17:8-9; Numbers 25:1-9; Joshua 7:1)

Clearly, they thought that the altar at the Jordan represented a rival place of sacrifice and worship, to compete with God's tabernacle, presently at Shiloh.

God had clearly commanded that there was one place of sacrifice and burnt offerings for Israel: Also you shall say to them: Whatever man of the house of Israel, or of the strangers who dwell among you, who offers a burnt offering or sacrifice, and does not bring it to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, to offer it to the Lord, that man shall be cut off from among his people. (Leviticus 17:8-9)

We understand from this that we cannot worship God any way we please, or justify a manner of worship just because we like it. First and always, our worship must be pleasing to God. We must worship Him in spirit and in truth. (John 4:24) [Guzik]

Phinehas reminds the Eastern tribes that Israel had been punished for rebellion against God before. He cites the rebellion at Peor (Numbers 25) and the sin of Achan (Joshua 7)

The incident at Peor would be especially meaningful to Phinehas because he was the one who stopped the plague by making a dramatic stand for righteousness on an occasion of gross sin.

Phinehas offers that the Eastern tribes taken possession of some of the land on the Western side, rather than defile themselves by turning away from false gods and worshipping the one true God!

This was an invitation made at great cost. It would have meant a much smaller area of land for the western tribes. But it didn't matter, because they were willing to sacrifice to see their brothers free from this sin. Too many of us lack this willingness; we tell people to stop sinning, but are not willing to help them if it costs us something. [Guzik]

Deuteronomy 12:5-14

⁵ But you are to **seek the place the Lord your God will choose from among all your tribes to put his Name there for his dwelling**. To that place you must go; ⁶ there bring your burnt offerings and sacrifices, your tithes and special gifts, what you have vowed to give and your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks. ⁷ There, in the presence of the Lord your God, you and your families shall eat and shall rejoice in everything you have put your hand to, because the Lord your God has blessed you.

⁸ **You are not to do as we do here today, everyone doing as they see fit,** ⁹ since you have not yet reached the resting place and the inheritance the Lord your God is giving you. ¹⁰ But you will cross the Jordan and settle in the land the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, and he will give you rest from all your enemies around you so that you will live in safety. ¹¹ **Then to the place the Lord your God will choose as a dwelling for his Name**—there you are to bring everything I command you: your burnt offerings and sacrifices, your tithes and special gifts, and all the choice possessions you have vowed to the Lord. ¹² And there rejoice before the Lord your God—you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, and the Levites from your towns who have no allotment or inheritance of their own. ¹³ **Be careful not to sacrifice your burnt offerings anywhere you please.** ¹⁴ **Offer them only at the place the Lord will choose in one of your tribes, and there observe everything I command you.**

Leviticus 17:8-9

⁸ “Say to them: ‘**Any Israelite or any foreigner residing among them who offers a burnt offering or sacrifice ⁹ and does not bring it to the entrance to the tent of meeting to sacrifice it to the Lord must be cut off from the people of Israel.**

Numbers 25:1-9

While Israel was staying in Shittim, **the men began to indulge in sexual immorality with Moabite women, ² who invited them to the sacrifices to their gods. The people ate the sacrificial meal and bowed down before these gods. ³ So Israel yoked themselves to the Baal of Peor. And the Lord’s anger burned against them.**

⁴ The Lord said to Moses, “Take all the leaders of these people, kill them and expose them in broad daylight before the Lord, so that the Lord’s fierce anger may turn away from Israel.”

⁵ So Moses said to Israel’s judges, “**Each of you must put to death those of your people who have yoked themselves to the Baal of Peor.**”

⁶ Then an Israelite man brought into the camp a Midianite woman right before the eyes of Moses and the whole assembly of Israel while they were weeping at the entrance to the tent of meeting. ⁷ When Phinehas son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, the priest, **saw this, he left the assembly, took a spear in his hand ⁸ and followed the Israelite into the tent. He drove the spear into both of them, right through the Israelite man and into the woman’s stomach.** Then the plague against the Israelites was stopped; ⁹ but those who died in the plague numbered 24,000.

Joshua 7:1

But the Israelites were unfaithful in regard to the devoted things; **Achan son of Karmi, the son of Zimri, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took some of them. So the Lord’s anger burned against Israel.**

9. How do Reuben, Gad and Manasseh respond to the accusation? (vv21-29)
They explain that if they had built this altar out of rebellion or disobedience to the Lord and turn offer burnt offerings and sacrifices, then they don’t deserve to be spared and the Lord Himself should call them to account.

They explain they built the altar out of fear that one day in the future, their descendants will ask “what do you have to do with the Lord, the God of Israel”. They also recognize that the River Jordan is like a boundary between them and the other tribes; even though they are all part of Israel.

They explain they didn’t build an altar for burnt offerings or sacrifices (v26). On the contrary, the altar was to be a witness between the Eastern tribes and the Western tribes and the generations that follow, that they will worship the Lord at his sanctuary with our burnt offerings, sacrifices and fellowship offerings. Then in the future your descendants will not be able to say to ours, ‘You have no share in the Lord’.

*If future generations ever say this to the Eastern tribes, or to their descendants, they will answer: Look at **the replica of the Lord’s altar**, which our ancestors built, not for burnt offerings and sacrifices, but **as a witness between us and you.**’*

10. What do Phinehas and the leaders discover after hearing the explanation from Reuben, Gad and Manasseh? What is the outcome? (vv30-33)

Phinehas and the leaders on hearing the explanation were very pleased (v30).

Phinehas realizes they were not being unfaithful to the Lord in building the altar and the Eastern tribes explanation has rescued the Israelites from the sort of punishment that they received in sinful incident at Peor or after Achan’s sin. (v31)

So Phinehas and the leaders returned to Canaan to report the good news to the rest of the Israelites (v32) and there was no more mention of going to war against the Eastern tribes (v33)

*Phinehas could see that the **Lord was among us**, because unity had been restored among the people of Israel. This fulfilled the passage from Psalm 133:1: Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! [Guzik]*

11. What is significant about the name of the altar? (v34)

*The altar was given the name **Witness Between Us** – because it was a witness to the tribes on both the Eastern and Western side of the Jordan - **that the Lord is God.***

12. **Ponder:** From question 3 (on verse 5), which of Joshua’s five challenges resonate with you most? Why?

The challenge “Love the Lord your God” resonates with me most – because if we Love the Lord our God properly – we will automatically fulfil the other four challenges!

13. **Ponder:** From question 3 (on verse 5), which of Joshua’s five challenges is the most difficult for you? Why?

The challenge “Walk in obedience to God” is difficult because we always fall short of God’s perfect standards; which is why we need Jesus!

Also to the challenge to “hold fast to the Lord” – is easy to start doubting when undergoing severe trials.

14. **Ponder:** What dangers do we see in this chapter?

- ***Danger of Non-Communicating** – we can bring about misunderstandings and confusion, if we don’t seek God’s wisdom first – and communicate our plans first before acting*
- ***Danger of Misunderstandings** – we can easily mistake someone’s actions when we don’t know their motives*
- ***Danger of Jumping to conclusions** – a wrong assumption can quickly become a serious conflict*
- ***Danger of allowing sin to spread** – sin isn’t merely an individual matter; it can often affect the whole community/family/church family*
- ***Danger of confusing symbols as reality** – perception is a tricky thing. The altar was not for sacrifices. The very thing that was made to preserve unity had almost caused a war. Good intentions can be totally misunderstood.*
- ***Danger of breaking fellowship without dialogue** – if there had been no dialogue in this incident – it would have been a complete disaster!*

15. How can churches today protect **unity** while remaining faithful to God’s truth? *Churches can protect unity by **speaking truth in love, listening before judging, addressing disagreements directly, and keeping Christ—not personal preferences—at the centre.** Unity must never mean compromising God’s truth, but truth should always be upheld with **humility, grace and a desire for reconciliation.** The process in Matthew 18:15-20 is helpful:*

¹⁵ “If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. ¹⁶ But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ ¹⁷ If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

¹⁸ “Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

¹⁹ “Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.”

We should respond to misunderstanding in the same manner, according to these same principles.

- *Respond with a concern for God’s holiness.*
- *Respond with the courage to confront in love.*
- *Respond with an attempt to reconcile before you fight.*
- *Determine that you are willing to sacrifice to help them; don’t confront unless you are willing to help.*
- *Determine that you will see the situation from the perspective of the other person.*
- *Determine that you will believe the best of one another.*

[Guzik]

Where is **JESUS** in **Joshua 22:1-34**?

- *Just like the two and half tribes of Gad, Reuben and Manasseh were understood, Jesus was grossly misunderstood throughout His life*
- *Just like the nine and half tribes on the Western side of the Jordan were prepared to stand up for truth and confront possible error; Jesus continually confronted people and always stood for God’s truth. Phinehas stands for God’s truth and is a type of Christ; as Jesus is the TRUTH.*

- *Just like the nine and half tribes on the Western side of the Jordan were prepared to sacrifice some of their land to prevent the two and half tribes from sin; Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice for sin.*
- *The Jordan was perceived as a barrier. Jesus removes all barriers and gives us access to the Father*
- *Joshua gives a blessing. Jesus is our ultimate blessing*
- *The Tabernacle is the presence of God and the only place of sacrifice. Jesus is God with us and the ultimate sacrifice for our sins!*

16. How do the following passages relate to **Joshua 22:1-34**?

Psalm 133

Psalm 133 tell us that God loves it when His people live together in unity. Joshua 22 is a picture of that unity.

John 17:20-23

In John 17:20-23 – Jesus prays for ALL believers in Him. He prays that “all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you”. In other words He wants believers to be “one” (unified) just like the Father and the Son are “one”. Jesus also prays that they “may also be in us (Father and Son)” – so this unity is in the fact that we are “God’s people” that’s where “complete unity” comes. This is again, the picture of unity in Joshua 22

Romans 12:9-21

This section of Romans 12 shows “love in action”. It is this love in action which brings people together in unity. For example – v18 “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.” And V21 “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good”. Again, just like the unity in Joshua 22.

1 Corinthians 12:12-27

In 1 Corinthians 12, the Apostle Paul describes the Church as one body in Christ with many parts. And he urges that there be no division in the body (v25) and that each part of the body should have equal concern for each other. In Joshua 22, Phinehas and the Western tribes had great concern for the Eastern tribes. As 1 Cor 12:26 says “if one part suffers, every parts suffers with it” – that’s how Phinehas and the Western tribes felt about the Eastern tribes.

Ephesians 2:11-22

In Ephesians 2:11-22 Paul describes how Jesus has removed the barrier/wall between Jews and Gentiles and has created one new humanity out of two (v15). He describes how believers are built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by the Spirit (v22). It’s like we are spiritual temple with Jesus as the cornerstone (v20). Again this picture of unity – seen in Joshua 22.

Ephesians 4:1-6

Here Paul describes unity in the Body of Christ. It means being completely humble and gentle, being patient, bearing with one another in love. Keeping unity in the Spirit through the bond of peace (we have in Jesus). Paul says there is ONE body (Jesus) and ONE Spirit, ONE Lord, ONE faith, ONE Baptism, ONE God and Father of all. All this binds us together. That’s what Phinehas realized in Joshua 22 that ALL the Israelites tribes (East or West) were ONE BODY under ONE God!

What’s the **BIG IDEA** of Joshua 22:1-34?

Truth protects the unity of God’s people!



What light globe moment did you have?

What **questions** do you have about the passages in this study?

Share the verse that had a special meaning to you in this study?

Joshua 22:5 (NIV) “But be very careful to keep the commandment and the law that Moses the servant of the LORD gave you: to love the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to him, to keep his commands, to hold fast to him and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul.”

Joshua 22:22 (NIV) “The Mighty One, God, the LORD! The Mighty One, God, the LORD! He knows! And let Israel know! If this has been in rebellion or disobedience to the LORD, do not spare us this day.”

Finish in prayer: Heavenly Father, help us to read and keep your Word; to love you with all our heart, soul, mind and strength; to walk in obedience to your Word by keeping your commands; help us to hold fast to you; and to serve you wholeheartedly. In doing so, we pray that they would be in unity with our brothers and sisters, as we are the body of Christ. In Jesus’ Name, we pray. Amen.

Study 3 – Finishing Well

Joshua 23:1-16

(Sermon on 16th August 2026)

Before we begin, how would you like to finish your life spiritually? What spiritual legacy would you like to leave?

*I would like my family and friends to remember me as someone who followed Jesus and who had **FOMO – a fear of people missing out on Heaven**. I want them to remember that I sought to show the love of Jesus to everyone, praying and hoping that through my words and actions they too might come to know Jesus and follow Him.*

*Most of all, I want my family to remember that the **most important thing in life is to believe in Jesus** – that His death brings forgiveness for our sins, and that His resurrection gives eternal life in Heaven to all who put their trust in Him.*

I would also like my family to understand how important it is to raise their children to know, love and follow Jesus, so that each generation may hear the good news of the Gospel and place their faith in Him.

Answers from Bible Study Group:

- *That all our children and grandchildren are saved*
- *That we are a Christian witness and example to our family.*
- *That our family see how important prayer is*

Read Joshua 23:1-16

1. What is the situation in verses 1 & 2?

Some time has passed now since the Israelites had occupied the land and Joshua is now a very old man [110 years old according to Joshua 24:29]. Therefore, he summoned all Israel – their elders, leaders, judges and officials (representing all of the tribes) to talk to them...

*Joshua can't, as a practical matter, speak to the whole nation, so he speaks to the leaders: **elders, heads, judges, and officers**. He can reach the entire nation by communicating well to the leaders. (Guzik)*

2. Why do you think Joshua has summoned all Israel to him? (v2)

Joshua is now very old and he wants to pass on some spiritual wisdom to the whole of Israel before he dies.

3. What is Israel to take stock of in verse 3?

They have seen everything that the Lord their God did to all the surrounding nations for their sake (as His people). And to realize it was the Lord their God who fought for them!

4. What is Israel to remember in verse 4?

*They are to remember that **God has given them the land as an inheritance. God fought for them** (see v3). **God has fulfilled His promises** [made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob]. **There is still work to do** – some nations still remain, so they must continue to trust God and remember that He is with them and has promised them the land.*

5. What encouragement and promise is there in verse 5?

God Himself will push out/drive out the nations that still remain in the land and they will take possession of their land, as the Lord God promised.

6. What instructions does Joshua give in verse 6? Have we heard these instructions before? Why are these instructions important? (Deuteronomy 17:18-20; Joshua 1:7)

V6 – “Be very strong; be careful to obey all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, without turning aside to the right or the left”.

Obedience is a major theme in Joshua – and the leader of the people is to set the standard/example required!

*Deuteronomy 17:18-20 – these verses were directed towards any future King of Israel – When he takes the throne of his kingdom, he is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law, taken from that of the Levitical priests. It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the Lord his God and **follow carefully all the words of this law** and these decrees and not consider himself*

better than his fellow Israelites and **turn from the law to the right or to the left**. Then he and his descendants will reign a long time over his kingdom in Israel..

*Joshua 1:7 – these words directed towards Joshua as the leader of the people - **Be strong and very courageous**. Be careful to **obey all the law** my servant Moses gave you; **do not turn from it to the right or to the left**, that you may be successful wherever you go.*

Satan doesn't care which extreme he pushes us towards. Either legalism or licentiousness among God's people pleases Satan [Guzik]

7. What instructions does Joshua give in verse 7? Why are these instructions important?

*The Israelites are **not to associate with the nations that remain among them**. Because these nations worship false gods and idols, and **the Israelites could be influenced by their pagan worship**. Therefore **they are not to invoke the names of their gods or swear by them; nor are they to serve or bow down to them**.*

*Joshua tells Israel to not even make mention of these false gods of the Canaanites. Instead of learning about them, they should **hold fast to the Lord** their God. [Guzik]*

8. What does it mean to "hold fast to the LORD"? (v8) (cf. Deuteronomy 10:20; 11:22; Joshua 22:5)

*The phrase "hold fast to the Lord" has a strong sense of **staying closely attached to God**. It is more than simply believing in God—it means making Him **the centre of our life and remaining loyal to Him**.*

The Hebrew word [דָּבַק] Dabaq – means to stick closely, cleave. The same word used in Genesis 2:24 – "A man is to leave his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh"

***Deuteronomy 10:20** – "Fear the LORD your God and serve him. **Hold fast to him...**" Holding fast means **worshipping, serving and trusting God alone**.*

Deuteronomy 11:22 – “...walk in all his ways and **hold fast to him.**”

It involves **obedience**—living God's way rather than our own.

Joshua 22:5 – “...love the LORD your God, walk in all his ways, obey his commands, **hold fast to him** and serve him with all your heart and soul.”

Hold fast here means: **to love God, walk in His ways, obey Him, serve Him wholeheartedly, and remain close to Him.**

An old saying concerning criminal enterprises says something to the effect of, “Keep your friends close, but your enemies even closer” but this is exactly what Christians are not to do. The normal Christian, by and large, is not called to become an expert in the cults or in heresy, but to become an expert in Jesus Christ — to hold fast to Him. [Guzik]

9. What do we discover about Israel’s battle, even “to this day”? How is that possible? (vv9-11)

V9 – Even to this day, the Lord has driven out before the Israelites great and powerful nations – such that no one can withstand them.

V10 – Even just one of the Israelites is able to drive out and rout a thousand of the enemy. Why? Because the Lord their God fights on their behalf.

This is only possible if – v11 – they are very careful to love the Lord their God. The implication is – if they love the Lord their God, they will OBEY Him!

Love the Lord your God: This is what they must be careful to do. They must, as Jude puts it, keep yourselves in the love of God (Jude 1:21).

i. Continually loving the Lord takes diligence. There are many things both within us and outside of us to draw us away from that love.

ii. This call to love God is an appeal to the will. We must decide to love God, even if the feelings of love for Him don’t come immediately. **[Guzik]**

10. What danger does Joshua warn against? What imagery does he use? (vv12-13)
Joshua warns against turning away from the Lord God and allying themselves with the remaining nations. And Joshua also warns against intermarrying with these remaining nations. If they do, then the Lord God will no longer drive out these nations

– and instead, **they will become a trap or a snare to them – they will be like whips to their backs and thorns in their eyes**, until they perish from this good land, which the Lord God has given them.

If they do not separate themselves from the ungodly influences around them, those influences will become to them instruments of torture, leading to their destruction.

i. What today is only an “innocent Canaanite” in our lives may become a torture and a snare tomorrow.

ii. “How often we see that the temptation we have pampered and encouraged and indulged in has become a scourge and a thorn in our side. The compromising Christian is not a happy man. Let the enemy remain in a Christian life, let him have one foothold, and he soon becomes a scourge.” (Redpath)

iii. These ungodly influences never advertise themselves as instruments of torture; they present themselves as wonderful things — but we must see past all this.

11. As Joshua is about to die, what does he remind the Israelites about? (v14)
Joshua reminds the Israelites of a golden truth: “not one of all the good promises the Lord your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed”

12. What warning does Joshua give about God’s covenant with Israel? (v16) From what you know of Israel’s behaviour in the following centuries, how does this warning ring true?

Joshua gives a severe warning to the Israelites: If they violate the covenant of the Lord your God, which he commanded them, and go and serve other gods and bow down to them, the Lord’s anger will burn against them, and they will quickly perish from the good land he has given you.”

It should remind us of the blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience mentioned in Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 28-29 and Joshua 8.

In the following centuries – The Israelites didn’t heed these warnings. The 12 tribes split into two kingdoms – the Southern Kingdom of 2 tribes (Judah and Benjamin) and the Northern Kingdom of the other 10 tribes. Both kingdoms descended into the

worship of false gods and idols. Both Kingdoms had wicked idolatrous kings who led the people astray. In 722 the Northern Kingdom was exiled to Assyria, and never returned. In 586, the Southern Kingdom was exiled to Babylon for 70 years and then a remnant returned.

13. In this chapter, what spiritual legacy does Joshua leave?

Joshua leaves Israel a spiritual legacy of **wholehearted faithfulness to the LORD**. He calls them:

- To remember all that God has done
- Trust God's promises
- Obey God's Word
- Hold fast to God, and reject the temptation to follow other gods
- He also warns them that disobedience has serious consequences.

In summary, Joshua's spiritual legacy is: Remember God's faithfulness, remain faithful to Him, and pass that faith on to the next generation.

14. What lessons can we learn from this chapter? What help do we have?
(Hebrews 12:1-3; John 15:4-5; Philippians 1:6)

Here are some **lessons** we can learn from this chapter:

- **Remember God's faithfulness to us** – from our past and from God's Word
- **Hold fast to God** – remain loyal to Him; love Him; obey Him and not allow the influences of this world to draw us away from Him. **CLING TO HIM!**
- **Take sin and compromise with the world seriously**
- **Ensure we pass on our faith to the next generation**
- **Continue to trust in God's promises**

The help we have...

Hebrews 12:1-3 – Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And **let us run with perseverance** the race marked out for us, ²**fixing our eyes on Jesus**, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne

of God. ³ Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

John 15:4-5 - ⁴ **Remain in me, as I also remain in you.** No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. **Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.**

⁵ “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; **apart from me you can do nothing.**

Philippians 1:6 - being confident of this, that **he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion** until the day of Christ Jesus.

We relate to God under a different covenant, a new and better covenant (Hebrews 8:6-7), by which Jesus has redeemed us from the curse of the law (Galatians 3:10-14).
i. Therefore, in Jesus we no longer can experience God’s “faithfulness to curse us” as Israel knew it. Yet we do experience God’s faithfulness to correct us as a loving Father (Hebrews 12:7), and we do experience a lack of appropriated blessing if we do not abide in Jesus. [Guzik]

Where is **JESUS** in **Joshua 23:1-16**?

- Joshua says “not one of God’s promise fail”. This points forward to Jesus who is YES and AMEN to All of God’s promises (2 Corinthians 1:20)
- Joshua says “hold fast to God”. This points forward to Jesus whom we are to hold fast to. As Jesus says in John 15:4: **“Remain in me, as I also remain in you”** and in John 15:5 **“Apart from me, you can do nothing”**
- As we can say throughout the book of Joshua – Joshua’s name and Jesus’ name are from the same root word and mean “The Lord Saves!”
- Joshua gives a farewell address to the people. Jesus did the same with His disciples in John 14-15 – where He tells them not to be troubled about His pending death; and that He is going ahead to prepare a place for them; and then He prays that they would remain (abide) in Him.
- Joshua calls the Israelites to obey the law and not deviate to the left or right; Jesus is the only ONE who can completely and fully obey the law perfectly.

15. How do the following passages relate to **Joshua 23:1-16**?

John 15:1-10

*Jesus calls His disciples to **remain in Him** and bear fruit. This parallels Joshua's command to "**hold fast to the LORD**" (v.8). We remain faithful by staying closely connected to Christ. Joshua was fruitful; we are to be fruitful and that is only possible in Jesus!*

2 Corinthians 6:14-18

*Paul warns against being **unequally yoked** with unbelief and calls God's people to separation from idolatry. This echoes Joshua's warning not to associate with or worship the gods of the surrounding nations (vv.7, 12-13).*

Ephesians 6:10-18

*Joshua warns Israel about spiritual enemies and the danger of being drawn away from the one true God. As Christians, we also face **spiritual opposition**, so we must be strong in the Lord and put on the **armour of God** for spiritual protection.*

Colossians 2:6-8

*Just as Israel was commanded to **continue walking faithfully with the LORD**, Christians are told to **continue to live in Christ**, rooted and established in Him, rather than being taken captive by deceptive thoughts and ideas.*

Hebrews 3:12-14

*Joshua warns Israel not to turn away from God. Hebrews 3 gives the same warning to Christians: "**See to it... that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.**" We must encourage one another to remain faithful.*

James 4:4-8

*Joshua warns against spiritual adultery by following false gods and idols. In a similar way, James warns against **friendship with the world** and calls believers to "**resist the devil**" and to "**submit yourselves... to God**" and "**come near to God.**"*

1 Peter 5:8-10

*Joshua warns that Israel's enemies could become a **snare and trap** (v.13). Peter warns that the devil is actively prowling around seeking someone to devour. As Christians, we must be **alert, watchful and steadfast in faith**, trusting God to strengthen us against the dangers.*

What's the **BIG IDEA** of Joshua 23:1-16?

Remember God's Faithfulness, hold fast to Him and remain faithful to Him



What light globe moment did you have?

What **questions** do you have about the passages in this study?

Share the verse that had a special meaning to you in this study?

V6 - Be very strong; be careful to obey all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, without turning aside to the right or to the left

Finish in prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for the lessons and legacy of Joshua. Help us to think through, what spiritual legacy we would like to leave; and enable us through your Word and Spirit, to leave a legacy of a true disciple of Jesus, who shows the love of Jesus in all of our life. In Jesus' Name, we pray. Amen.

Study 4 – Whom will you serve?

Joshua 24:1-28

(Sermon on 23rd August 2026)

Before we begin, what is a covenant, and have we come across covenant in the book of Joshua before?

*The Hebrew word for covenant is “berith” and it literally means “cutting”. If we recall the covenant that God made with Abraham in Genesis 15, God tells Abram to bring a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon. Abram **cuts** the larger animals in half and arranges the pieces opposite each other. Then a smoking firepot [presence of God] with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces – and in this way God made a deal (covenant) with Abraham. The purpose of **cutting** the animals was like saying, whoever breaks this covenant, that’s what will happen to them; they’ll be cut in half. The thing is though, when God caused this smoking pot to pass between the cut pieces, Abraham was asleep. It was like God was saying, no matter what, I’ll keep my side of this covenant; I won’t be the one breaking it!*

*When God made this covenant with Abraham in Genesis 12-22, He promised Abraham **land**, a great nation of **many descendants** and **blessings**. God even promised that **through one of Abraham’s descendants [Jesus] all nations would be a blessed** [Genesis 22:18]*

*In the Book of Joshua, we have already come across the idea of a covenant in **Joshua 8:30-35** where God renewed His covenant with the Israelites and made them read out the **blessings for obedience** and **curses for disobedience**.*

*We also saw that Joshua and the Israelites made a covenant with the Gibeonites which was an unwise one; but nevertheless they kept that covenant (Joshua 9:15-20) **Covenant agreements are not meant to be broken!***

Read Joshua 24:1-13

1. Where did Joshua assemble the tribes of Israel? Why is this an appropriate place? *The tribes assembled at **Shechem** – not Shiloh where the tabernacle was at the time. Why?*

*As we’ve said previously, **Shechem is historically an important place:***

- *God first promised the land to Abraham there (Genesis 12:6–7).*

- Jacob settled there and built an altar (Genesis 33:18–20).
- Jacob also called his household to put away foreign gods there (Genesis 35:2–4)

It seems logical to renew the covenant, where God first promised Abraham the land and where Jacob built an altar to the Lord – and where foreign gods were put away! And of course, it's where Joshua had previously gathered Israel at Shechem for covenant renewal in Joshua 8:30–35.

It reminds Israel that the covenant began with God and Abraham; and God's gracious promises were to Abraham; not Joshua! And now some 600 years after Abraham, the covenant promises made to Abraham have come to pass.

It's like saying "look where God has brought you from!"

2. What blessings does Joshua list from vv2-13?

- God called Abraham from beyond the Euphrates where **Abraham's father and ancestors all worshipped false/other gods!**
- God gave Abraham many descendants
- God gave Abraham a son - Isaac.
- God gave Isaac – two sons - Jacob and Esau.
- God gave Esau the hill country of Seir – but Jacob and his family went down to Egypt!
- God sent Moses and Aaron to deliver Israel from Egypt.
- God brought Israel out of Egypt – and they were pursued by the Egyptians on chariots and horses!
- God protected them in the wilderness and allowed them to cross the Red Sea by miraculously parting the sea!
- God brought judgment upon Egypt.
- God sustained Israel in the wilderness.
- God helped the Israelites to defeat the Amorites on the East of the Jordan
- God defeated Balak and Balaam's plans to curse Israel.
- God gave Israel victory over their enemies: the Amorites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hittites, Girgashites, Hivites and Jebusites
- God gave them the Promised Land which they did not previously toil!
- God gave them cities they had not built.
- God gave them vineyards and olive groves they had not planted.

The repeated theme is: God did it. God gave it. God delivered. God provided.

3. Which of these blessings were gifts of grace rather than rewards for Israel's achievements?

Virtually all of them. Israel did not earn or deserve them:

- *Abraham's calling.*
- *The promise of Isaac.*
- *The Exodus from Egypt*
- *God's protection in the wilderness.*
- *Victory over their enemies.*
- *The defeat of Balaam's curse.*
- *The Promised Land allocated to them.*
- *The cities, vineyards and olive groves – which they didn't have to establish for themselves!*

Even where Israel had to fight, God was the one who gave the victory.

A crucial point to understanding Joshua 24: Israel's obedience is a response to God's grace and , not a way of earning God's grace and favour.

This is a very important Christian principle too. We don't serve God in order to make Him love us. We serve Him because He has already loved us and saved us – in Jesus – and serving is a wholehearted thankful response!

Read Joshua 24:14-24

4. What commands does Joshua give the people? (vv14-15)

- ***fear the Lord*** (reverent fear; not a phobia!) and ***serve him with all faithfulness***
- ***Throw away the[false] gods*** your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt
- ***Serve the Lord.***
- Joshua presents a ***choice***: a) ***serve the gods the Israelites ancestors served*** beyond the Euphrates; or b) ***serve the gods of the Amorites*** in whose land (Promised Land) they are living in currently; or c) ***serve the Lord, God YHWH***, as Joshua and his household will do!

5. **Ponder:** How does verse 15 relate to you and your household?

Although this is a personal questions. Some things to consider...

Joshua says “as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord!”

Some questions for us to perhaps ask ourselves:

- *Is Jesus really Lord of our household?*
- *What does that look like in our household?*
- *Is Jesus and His Kingdom’s work a priority in our household?*
- *Do we reflect to our children and grandchildren that Jesus is the most important person in our lives*
- *Would people know we were followers of Jesus by our actions and words?*
- *Are there things in our lives that prevent us putting God first in our lives!*

6. What reasons do the people give for serving the Lord? (vv16-18)

The people give the following reasons for serving the Lord:

- *God brought them and their parents out of Egypt and out of slavery*
- *God performed great signs [plagues; Red Sea; pillar of fire and cloud; manna; water from a rock]*
- *God protected them during their time in the wilderness and as they travelled through other nations’ land*
- *God drove out the nations occupying the Promised Land, including the Amorites*
- *God gave them the Promised Land*

Therefore, like Joshua, they will serve the Lord!

7. What is the gist of the candid dialogue that takes place between Joshua and the people? (vv19-24)

Rather than just take the people’s word; Joshua challenges them to think about what they are saying and what they are promising!

Joshua says “you are not able to serve the Lord. He is a Holy God; He is a jealous God! And He will not forgive their rebellion and their sins!”

Joshua says that if the people forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, God will turn away from them and bring disaster on them.

It’s like Joshua is saying “Do you really understand what you promising when you say, you will serve the Lord!”

The people promise “No! We will serve the Lord!”

And when Joshua reminds them “they are witnesses against themselves that they have chosen to serve the Lord!”; they again say “We will serve the Lord!”

*Having established, they are genuine, Joshua tells them to: “**throw away the foreign gods that are among you and yield your hearts to the Lord, the God of Israel.**”*

The bottom line is the Israelites will not be able to follow and serve the Lord under their own strength; they will need to keep in a close faithful covenant relationship with the Lord.

Read Joshua 24:25-28

8. What covenant does Joshua establish? (vv25-26) What covenant are we under as Christians?

*Joshua establishes a **covenant with the people at Shechem**, reaffirming their commitment to serve the LORD alone and throw away any foreign gods and false worship!*

*For us, as Christians, we are under **the New Covenant in Jesus’ blood** (Luke 22:20)*

The difference is this:

In Joshua 24, Israel commits herself to serve the Lord! In the New Covenant, Jesus commits Himself as the Servant King and gives Himself for His people on a cruel cross! What we are required to do is respond to God’s grace in sending Jesus to save us, by being obedient; not so we can save ourselves; but so we can be forever thankful for receiving the grace of Lord Jesus!

9. Why does Joshua set up the large stone? (vv26–27) As Christians, what memorials do we have?

*The large stone was a **visible reminder and witness** of the covenant that Israel made with God.*

The stone would remind Israel: “Remember what you promised. Remember what God has done.”

Christians also have some memorials of God's saving work.

Obviously, the sacraments:

- **Baptism** — a visible sign of belonging to Christ and the washing away of our sins through Jesus' death and resurrection.
- **The Lord's Supper/Communion** — Jesus commanded His disciples to remember Him through the bread [His body broken] and wine [His blood poured out for us].

The Lord's Supper particularly echoes Joshua's memorial stone:

Remember what God has done. Remember Christ. Remember the covenant.

10. **Ponder:** As we reflect on this chapter; whom or what are we serving other than God/Jesus? What might we have to let go of?

Here are some possible gods/idols we might have to let go of: money; wealth; possessions; career; comfort; family; friends; success; reputation; shopping, sport; entertainment; technology; political party or causes; others' approval; our own selfish desires; **even Church activity – if being busy for God/Jesus replaces being with God/Jesus!**

Perhaps a nice helpful question to ask ourselves: **What would be hardest for me to give up if Jesus asked me to?**

11. If someone were to describe your life in one sentence, what would you hope they would say? {Ask your group members what they would say, if you are comfortable with this?} How can you live now so that your life points to Jesus?

I would hope people would say: "He loved Jesus and showed the love of Jesus to others; so that they might love Jesus too!"

To live now so that my life points to Jesus – I would need to focus on modelling my love of Jesus – in what I think; in what I say; and in what I do!

Where is **JESUS** in **Joshua 24:1-28**?

- Joshua recalls how God is the **author of the Israelites' salvation**. This points to the fact that **Jesus is the author and perfecter of our faith** – through His death on the cross – therefore we must fix our eyes on Jesus (Hebrews 12:2)

- Joshua renews the covenant; Jesus' blood IS the **NEW COVENANT!**
- Joshua demands **exclusive allegiance**. Jesus demands **exclusive allegiance** – “I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father, except through Me”[Jesus] (John 14:6) and “No one can serve two masters” (Matthew 6:24)
- Joshua questions the people's decision to serve the Lord to make sure they are *fair dinkum*; in the same way in Luke 14:25-33, Jesus urges His followers to “count the cost” before following Him!

12. How do the following passages relate to **Joshua 24:1-28**?

Matthew 6:24

Joshua demands exclusive allegiance to God; He asks the people whom they will serve – false gods or the one true God YHWH. Joshua echoes what Jesus is saying here in Matthew 6:24 that we CANNOT serve two masters.

Matthew 22:37-40

Here Jesus summarises God's law; we are to love the Lord God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. This is what Joshua means by his household serving the Lord. Serving is not just religious duty; it means wholehearted faithfulness to God and loving others with the love of Jesus. In one word it is “LOVE”!

Luke 22:19–20

Here, Jesus establishes a New Covenant in His blood shed on the cross – as the once and for all sacrifice for sin; therefore there is no need for repeated animal sacrifices for sin anymore; Jesus has done it all. Joshua establishes/renews the covenant with God at Shechem, pointing forward to Jesus' New Covenant. Also just as the stone erected was a memorial of God's covenant; the Lord's Supper is a memorial of the New Covenant.

John 4:23-24

Jesus talks to the Samaritan women at the well who says she worships God at the mountain in Samaria, whereas the Jews worship at Jerusalem. Jesus tells her that proper worship is “in Spirit and Truth”; implying that worship is not tied to a

location. Likewise, Joshua calls the people to genuine worship and service and he calls the people to move away from divided loyalty and the worship of false gods/idols.

Romans 12:1-2

Paul explains what proper worship is – to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice. That amounts to giving all ourselves to God. This is what Joshua means by saying “as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord” and telling them to “throw away the gods of your ancestors”

1 Corinthians 11:23–26

Here Paul explains how he first received the institution of the Lord’s Supper from our Lord Jesus. This not only introduces the New Covenant in Jesus which connects with Joshua’s renewal of the covenant with God; but also the Lord’s Supper is a memorial to help us remember and recall Jesus’ sacrifice – and in the same way – Joshua and the people erect a memorial stone to remember and recall their covenant with God.

Philippians 3:7-14

This passage connects with Joshua 24 in several ways:

- *Both Joshua and Paul look back on what God did*
- *Both Joshua and Paul both commit to serve the Lord – Joshua 24:14-15 and Philippians 3:8, 12*
- *Both Joshua and Paul reject divided loyalty – Joshua 24:23 and Philippians 3:9*
- *Both Joshua and Paul talk about continuing with the Lord and pressing on to inherit the Promised Land (in our case that is Heaven).*

Colossians 3:23-24

*Paul teaches that “whatever we do, work at it with all our heart, as working for the Lord” – so everything we do is in relation to God. Likewise, Joshua teaches that our lives belong to the Lord. **Paul shows in Colossians what they looks like***

practically – whatever we do, we do it for Jesus! Both Joshua and Paul call for people to serve the Lord!

What's the **BIG IDEA** of Joshua 24:1-28?

REMEMBER GOD'S FAITHFULNESS, REJECT OTHER GODS and SERVE THE LORD WHOLEHEARTED!



What light globe moment did you have?

What **questions** do you have about the passages in this study?

Share the verse that had a special meaning to you in this study?

V15 - But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord."

Finish in prayer: Heavenly Father, help us to make Jesus our first priority in our lives; and put off anything that hinders us from following Jesus. Help us to be able to join Joshua and say "as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord". In Jesus' Name, we pray. Amen.

Study 5 – God Servants Die but God’s Work Continues

Joshua 24:29-33

(Sermon on 30th August 2026)

Background Reading...Read Genesis 50:22-26, Exodus 13:19 and Hebrews 11:22

1. Why did Joseph insist that his bones not remain in Egypt? What does that reveal about his faith?

Genesis 50:22-26 - ²² Joseph stayed in Egypt, along with all his father’s family. He lived a hundred and ten years ²³ and saw the third generation of Ephraim’s children. Also the children of Makir son of Manasseh were placed at birth on Joseph’s knees. ²⁴ Then Joseph said to his brothers, “I am about to die. But God will surely come to your aid and take you up out of this land to the land he promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” ²⁵ And Joseph made the Israelites swear an oath and said, “God will surely come to your aid, and then you must carry my bones up from this place.” ²⁶ So Joseph died at the age of a hundred and ten. And after they embalmed him, he was placed in a coffin in Egypt.

Exodus 13:19 – ¹⁹ Moses took the bones of Joseph with him because Joseph had made the Israelites swear an oath. He had said, “God will surely come to your aid, and then you must carry my bones up with you from this place.”

Hebrews 11:22 - By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions concerning the burial of his bones.

*Joseph knew that God had promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that their descendants would eventually **possess the land of Canaan [Promised Land]**. Even though Joseph had lived most of his life in Egypt and had become a powerful Egyptian official, he knew that **Egypt was not Israel’s ultimate home**. Joseph therefore made the Israelites swear that when God brought them out of Egypt, they would **carry his bones with them**. This was eventually fulfilled in **Exodus 13:19**, when Moses took Joseph’s bones with the Israelites during the Exodus.*

What this shows about Joseph’s faith:

- 1. Joseph believed in God’s promise of the Promised Land, even though he had not and would not see it fulfilled*
- 2. Joseph identified himself with God’s people and God’s future and desired to be part of it – even it was just his bones!*

2. How many years passed between Joseph's death and the burial of his bones at Shechem? What does this teach us about God's timing and faithfulness?

*Commentators estimate about **360 years** passed between Joseph's death and the burial of his bones at Shechem.*

- ***Joseph died at 110 years old** — Genesis 50:26.*
- ***Israel remained in Egypt for 430 years** — Exodus 12:40–41.*
- ***After the Exodus, the Israelites spent 40 years in the wilderness.***
- ***They then entered Canaan under Joshua, and Joseph's bones were eventually buried at **Shechem**** — Joshua 24:32.*

*The exact number depends on how the 430 years is calculated, but **roughly 350–360 years** is a reasonable figure.*

What this teaches about God's timing and faithfulness:

1. *God's timing is different from ours*
2. *God's delay is not failure on God's part – God had not forgotten His promise and never forgets His promises – sometimes delays are to allow other things to happen first*
3. *God's promises might take a very long time to be fulfilled*
4. *Sometimes God's promises and faithfulness extend beyond generations. Neither Abraham, nor Isaac, nor Jacob, nor Joseph saw the Promised Land – but God still kept His promise*

Background Reading...Read Numbers 20:22-29 and Numbers 27:18-23.

3. How did Eleazar become High Priest, and what important role did he play alongside Joshua?

Numbers 20:22-29 - ²² *The whole Israelite community set out from Kadesh and came to Mount Hor. ²³ At Mount Hor, near the border of Edom, the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, ²⁴ "Aaron will be gathered to his people. He will not enter the land I give the Israelites, because both of you rebelled against my command at the waters of Meribah. ²⁵ Get Aaron and his son Eleazar and take them up Mount Hor. ²⁶ **Remove Aaron's garments and put them on his son Eleazar,** for Aaron will be gathered to his people; he will die there."*

²⁷ Moses did as the Lord commanded: They went up Mount Hor in the sight of the whole community. ²⁸ Moses removed Aaron's garments and put them on his son Eleazar. And Aaron died there on top of the mountain. Then Moses and Eleazar came down from the mountain, ²⁹ and when the whole community learned that Aaron had died, all the Israelites mourned for him thirty days.

Eleazar succeeded his father, Aaron, as High Priest.

Numbers 27:18-23 - ¹⁸ So the Lord said to Moses, "Take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit of leadership, and lay your hand on him. ¹⁹ Have him stand before **Eleazar the priest** and the entire assembly and commission him in their presence. ²⁰ Give him some of your authority so the whole Israelite community will obey him. ²¹ He is to stand before **Eleazar the priest, who will obtain decisions for him by inquiring of the Urim before the Lord.** At his command he and the entire community of the Israelites will go out, and at his command they will come in."

²² Moses did as the Lord commanded him. He took Joshua and had him stand before Eleazar the priest and the whole assembly. ²³ Then he laid his hands on him and commissioned him, as the Lord instructed through Moses.

Eleazar obtained decisions for Joshua from God using the stones: Urim and Thummim. Joshua succeeded Moses and led the people into and through the conquest of Canaan. Eleazar was the High Priest who represented the people before God and had responsibility for the priestly and religious aspects of Israel's life. A particularly important role they shared was distributing the Promised Land among the tribes.

Read Joshua 24:29-33

4. What three deaths/burials are recorded here?

- *Joshua died and was buried at Timnath Serah (v29–30).*
- *Joseph died long before, but his bones were finally buried at Shechem (v32).*
- *Eleazar the priest died and was buried at Gibeah (v33).*

This passage brings together three generations of God's servants.

5. Why do you think the book ends by recording Joshua, Joseph and Eleazar rather than ending at verse 28?

This ending to the book shows us that God's work continues beyond the lives of His faithful servants.

Joshua has finished his task, but God's purposes have not finished yet. These deaths also provide a sense of closure and transition: the generation that experienced the Exodus and conquest is passing away, and a new generation will carry on God's work going forward.

*It also reinforces one of the major themes of Joshua: **God is faithful to his promises even when individual servants come and go.***

6. How is Joshua described? (v29) Why is 'servant of the Lord' such an honourable title? Who else in the Old Testament is described like that?

*Joshua is described as "**the servant of the LORD**" (v29). It is an honourable title because Joshua's life was ultimately defined not by his position as Israel's leader, but by how faithfully He served the Lord and the Lord's people!*

As God's servant: Joshua trusted God's promises; obeyed God's commands; led God's people; remained faithful through many difficulties; and faithfully completed the task God had given him.

*Other people in the Old Testament described as "**servant of the LORD**" include Moses (Deuteronomy 34:5), David (2 Samuel 7:5), and the prophets collectively (e.g. Jeremiah 25:4).*

*Ultimately when we get to the New Testament, **Jesus is the ultimate Servant of the Lord**, who came not to be served but to serve and give his life for others (Mark 10:45).*

7. What encouragement is found in verse 31? What made this generation different?

Verse 31 says: "Israel served the LORD throughout the lifetime of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him and who had experienced everything the LORD had done for Israel."

*What is encouraging is that **Joshua's generation remained faithful to the LORD**. What made them different was that they had personally experienced God's mighty acts—the Exodus, wilderness provision, crossing the Jordan, and conquest of Canaan.*

They had seen for themselves what the LORD had done. And they committed to following Joshua's example of faithfulness and commitment to serve the Lord. This also highlights the importance of us passing on our testimony to the next generation. The next generation needs to hear and see the faithfulness of God for themselves.

8. Why is the burial of Joseph's bones so significant? (v32) (cf. Hebrews 11:22)
Even though it took hundreds of years, it shows that God keeps His promises and it also highlights Joseph as an example of faith. Faith is believing without necessarily seeing it for yourself. "blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:29)

*Hebrews 11:22 highlights Joseph as an example of faith. Joseph trusted God's promise even though he would not live to see its fulfilment. Joseph's burial in Canaan demonstrates: **God keeps his promises—even when the fulfilment takes longer than we expect.***

9. Why is Shechem an appropriate place for Joseph's burial? (cf. Genesis 12:6-7; 33:18-20; Joshua 24:1)

Shechem is a place that is central to God's covenant promises.

- ***Genesis 12:6–7** – Abraham came to Shechem, and God promised to give the land to Abraham's descendants.*
- ***Genesis 33:18–20** – Jacob settled at Shechem and built an altar to God.*
- ***Joshua 24:1** – Joshua gathered Israel at Shechem to renew the covenant with God and they promised to serve the Lord wholeheartedly.*

So Joseph is buried at the place where God originally made a covenant with Abraham. It seems fitting (even beautiful) that Joseph's bones finally rested in the very land God had promised to Joseph's ancestors.

10. Why is Eleazar's death an appropriate way to conclude Joshua's account of the conquest and settlement of the land? (v33) (cf. Joshua 14:1 and Joshua 19:51)
Eleazar was the High Priest and worked alongside Joshua in the distribution of the Promised Land to the tribes of Israel. Joshua 14:1 says: "Eleazar the priest, Joshua son

of Nun, and the heads of the tribal clans of Israel were the ones who allotted the land...”

Likewise, Joshua 19:51 identifies Eleazar, Joshua and the tribal leaders as those responsible for distributing the inheritance.

So the death of Eleazar brings the account of the occupation of the Promised Land, to a very fitting conclusion because both Joshua and Eleazar—the two key leaders involved in possessing and distributing the land—have now completed their work. Joshua represented Israel's leadership; Eleazar represented its priesthood, worship and spiritual guidance.

11. Looking back over the whole book of Joshua, what promises of God have now been fulfilled? (cf. Joshua 21:43-45)

*Joshua 21:43–45 gives a summary: “**Not one of all the LORD’s good promises to Israel failed; every one was fulfilled.**”*

God’s promises fulfilled include:

- *God gave Israel the Promised Land (Joshua 1:2–6).*
- *God gave them victory over their enemies.*
- *God gave them rest from their enemies (21:44).*
- *God gave the land to the tribes as their inheritance.*
- *God was with Joshua as he had promised Moses (1:5).*
- *God's promises that He made to the patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob concerning the land are all fulfilled.*
- *God's people were established in the Promised Land.*

*The major theological theme of the Book of Joshua is: **God always keeps his promises.***

12. What qualities helped Joshua finish well?

Joshua’s qualities include:

- **Faith** – *Joshua trusted in all God's promises.*

- **Courage** – Joshua showed great courage even when circumstances were frightening and still obeyed.
- **Obedience** – Joshua followed God's instructions.
- **Perseverance** – Joshua continued despite opposition and setbacks.
- **Humility** – Joshua never claimed victory was his, Joshua humbly recognized that all the victories the Israelites achieved belonged to the LORD.
- **Leadership** – he faithfully led God's people just like Moses did.
- **Faithfulness** – Joshua remained totally committed to the LORD throughout his life.
- **Joshua was concerned for the next generation** – he repeatedly challenged Israel to remain faithful to the Lord as He was (Joshua 24:15).

Ultimately, Joshua finished well because he remained totally devoted to the LORD.

13. Joshua, Joseph and Eleazar are all gone, yet God's work continued. What does that teach us about our Christian walk and about Christian ministry today?

This is a key application in this passage in Joshua 24:29-33.

God's work does not depend upon any one human servant.

We are called to be faithful, but we are not indispensable. Eventually we will hand responsibilities to others, retire, become unable to serve as we once did, or die. But God remains faithful.

That should both humble us and give us confidence:

- **Humility** – because the battle and the work belongs to God, not us.
- **Confidence** – because God's purposes will continue after we are gone. Nothing can stop God's word and purposes (Isaiah 55)
- **We also have a Responsibility** – because we should proactively prepare others to continue God's work.

For older Christians especially, we can be encouraged: our ministry is not wasted simply because we cannot do what we once did. We can still encourage, pray, teach, mentor and pass our faith on to others!

14. **Ponder:** Think of someone(s) in the next generation that you can pass the baton on to? (2 Timothy 2:2) What will you do about that?

I'm thinking of my grandchildren; Friday Jaffa children and School children at SRE.

*2 Timothy 2:2 gives us a great principle: **"The things you have heard me say...entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others."***

Paul describes four generations of ministry:

Paul → Timothy → reliable people → others.

The question isn't simply "Who can replace me?" but: "Who can I invest time in now so that God's work can continue when I am no longer able to do it?"

What this might look like:

- *Getting beside a younger person and encouraging them in their faith*
- *Inviting someone to serve alongside us – with a view to handing over*
- *Teaching them things you've learned;*
- *Gradually giving someone we mentor increased responsibility;*
- *Praying regularly for God to raise up those who "will also be qualified to teach others"*
- *Sharing the benefits of your experience and your mistakes with them.*

15. **Ponder:** Is there some ministry in church you could serve in that would help God's work to continue into the future?

*Perhaps the better question is: **"Where can I invest my time, experience and gifts so that someone else is better equipped to serve Christ?"***

Here are some ideas as example:

- *mentoring a younger Christian;*
- *helping with children's or youth ministry;*
- *encouraging a new Bible study leader;*
- *praying for future leaders;*
- *teaching someone practical ministry skills;*

- *visiting and encouraging older or isolated members – and train someone in pastoral care.*
- *helping someone discover and use their spiritual gifts.*
- *Meet with someone to read the Bible and pray.*

Where is **JESUS** in **Joshua 24:29-33**?

- *Joshua is described as the “**servant of the Lord**” - Jesus is the **ultimate Servant of the Lord**, who came not to be served but to serve and give his life for others (Mark 10:45)*
- *The deaths in verses 29–33 highlight the need for a greater Joshua. The passage ends with Joshua, Joseph and Eleazar all dead. God's servants come and go— but God's purposes continue.
And ultimately we need a leader who doesn't die and remain dead. Joshua dies. Eleazar dies. Joseph dies. **Jesus dies—but rises again and lives forever.***
- *Joseph is a Christ-like figure – Joseph saves people from famine in Egypt and Canaan – pointing to Jesus who saves us from sin, death and Satan. Joshua is a Christ-like figure – he leads people to victory and into the Promised Land – pointing to Jesus who leads us to the Heavenly Promised Land. Eleazar is the High Priest who administers the sacrifices for sin and points us to our Great High Priest Jesus – who is also the once and for all sacrifice for sin.*

16. How do the following passages relate to **Joshua 24:29-33**?

1 Corinthians 3:5-10

Paul says: “I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow.” (v6). God was ultimately responsible for the growth of His Kingdom. This is very similar to Joshua 24. Joshua, Joseph and Eleazar were faithful servants, but they were not the ones ultimately responsible for God's work continuing. They each had their particular role and generation.

The lesson: We should faithfully do the work God gives us, but remember that God is the one who gives the growth. This also guards us against thinking that the future of the church depends entirely upon us – and guards us from thinking we are indispensable.

Philippians 1:3-6 (especially verse 6)

*Paul assures us: “**He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.**”*

This ties in with Joshua 24.

*Joshua's work came to an end because **Joshua died**, but God's work did not come to an end. The same God who began his work with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob continued it through Joseph, Moses, Joshua and Eleazar—and would continue it after their deaths.*

The lesson for us:** Our confidence is ultimately not in our ability to keep God's work going, but in **God's faithfulness to complete what he has begun.

2 Timothy 4:6-8

*Paul says: “**I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.**”*

This is perhaps the closest parallel to Joshua's death in verse 29. Joshua had faithfully completed the task God had given him and fought the good fight. Paul likewise could look back at the end of his life and say that he had finished well. Both passages encourage us to ask: ‘Am I faithfully completing the task God has given me?’

And Paul's confidence, like Joshua's, isn't in his own achievements but in God's reward and faithfulness.

Hebrews 12:1-3

*Hebrews 12 speaks of being: “**surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses**” and then says: “**let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus.**”*

*Joshua, Joseph and Eleazar can all be seen as examples of people who faithfully ran their race. They become part of the great cloud of witnesses. But Hebrews goes one step further and says: don't ultimately fix your eyes on Joshua, Joseph, Eleazar—or even on other Christian leaders. **Fix your eyes on Jesus.***

Joshua, Joseph, Eleazar finished their race and died. Jesus finished His race, died, rose again and now reigns. So Hebrews 12:1–3 gives us the ultimate conclusion to

Joshua 24: remember these faithful servants, learn from them, but keep your eyes on Jesus.

What's the **BIG IDEA** of Joshua 24:29-33?

God's servants may pass away, but God's promises and purposes continue.

OR

Finish faithfully, pass the baton, and trust God to continue his work.



What light globe moment did you have?

What **questions** do you have about the passages in this study?

Share the verse that had a special meaning to you in this study?

²⁹ After these things, Joshua son of Nun, **the servant of the Lord**, died at the age of a hundred and ten.

Finish in prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you that even though your faithful servants die, your work and your promises continue. Please help us to be faithful in teaching the next generation about Jesus and passing the baton on to them. In Jesus' Name, we pray. Amen.