

Part I, Cont'd

The History

The next twelve books are historical. They record the period of about 1,000 years, from the entry into the Promised Land (about 1450 BC) until the return from exile and the beginning of the "silent period" (about 400 BC). The Books of History were compiled by a number of different men.

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The History, Book 1

Joshua

The Book of Joshua, named for the leader who replaced Moses, records the conquest of Canaan, the division of the land west of the Jordan River among the tribes, and the settling of the Israelites into their new homeland.

Joshua was born a slave in Egypt and, with Caleb, was one of the two faithful spies who rendered the positive report to Moses that Canaan could be conquered, giants and all, because God was with them. Of all the men age 20 and above who left Egypt with Moses, they are the only two still living; and the only adult survivors of the Exodus who were allowed to enter the Promised Land. According to Josephus, Joshua was 85 when he succeeded Moses¹. He led Israel for about 25 years, during which Canaan was conquered, the tribes established in their areas, and the Tabernacle set up at Shiloh². He was 110 at the time of his death³.

A. Author. The human author was Joshua (see 24:26), except for the postscript (24:29-33), written after his death, and 5 other verses which describe events that took place after his death (15:16-19; 19:47). It is not known who added these verses in Chapters 15 and 19 to Joshua's book, but Jewish tradition holds that the postscript was written by the High Priest

¹ Josephus, Antiquities, 5.1.29.

² Actually, the Israelites never occupied all of the land promised to them, and never eliminated all the pagans, until the time of David (13:1, 15:63, 16:10, 17:12).

³ Joshua 24:29

Eleazer, son of Aaron, and that the last verse, describing Eleazer's death, was written by his son, Phinehas, who succeeded his father as High Priest.

B. Place and Date. Joshua was written in Canaan, probably as a journal, as the events transpired in the middle of the 15th Century BC (about 1460-1435 BC)⁴.

C. Occasion. Like the books of The Law, Joshua was written as directed and inspired by the Spirit of God. From the Creation, God saw to it that records were kept of all significant events, and that a history of the human race was developed.

D. Theme. The theme of Joshua is the fulfillment of redemption. Redemption (in modern speech we usually use the synonym, salvation) may be thought of as having two parts: leaving, and entering--that is, to leave the old life, and enter the new life. We must leave the previous, sinful, life (which we call repentance); and then we must enter the family of God by receiving the gift of forgiveness and salvation. Thus it was with the redemption of the Israelites: they first had to leave the paganism and slavery of Egypt; and then they had to enter and possess the Promised Land. The previous four books of the Law are the story of the "leaving"; Joshua is the story of the "entering," to complete the process of the redemption of the children of Israel.

E. Highlights. Highlights of Joshua include the following:

1. The New Arrangement: God Now Speaks to Joshua. (1:1-2)

Moses is dead, and Joshua takes his place as God's prophet and judge over the Israelites. Beginning now, God will speak directly to Joshua when necessary, and will speak to the people through him.

NOTE: It may be useful to refer back to the study guide to Numbers, Highlight 11, and the explanatory NOTE following, concerning the changing of Joshua's name by Moses before sending him out as one of the 12 men who were to scout out the Promised Land.

2. A Daunting Assignment and a Wonderful Promise. (1:3-9)

As the Lord speaks to Joshua about his new role as the leader of the people, He summarizes the awesome assignment of conquering and possessing the land, and makes a wonderful promise that makes the conquest possible: the Lord will go with them to guide and empower to do it all, if they will only trust and obey Him.

⁴ No effort is made here to assign specific dates; if the Exodus began about 1500 BC and lasted for 40 years, then the death of Moses occurred about 1460 BC. Since there is evidence that Joshua assumed command of the Israelites at age 85, and died at age 110, then the possession and settling of the Promised Land took place over a period of 25 years and ended about 1435 BC.

3. Scouting Out Jericho. (2:1-7)

Joshua, the old veteran of the reconnaissance team that Moses sent into Canaan 40 years earlier, sends a two-man team to scout out Jericho and the



Then she let them down by a cord through the window, for her house was upon the town wall.

Joshua 2:15

surrounding country. They infiltrate the city and meet a remarkable woman who saves their lives and, in the process, saves her own and the lives of her family members.

NOTE: *Rahab the harlot arises from ignominious obscurity to become an ancestor of the future Messiah, and one of only three women mentioned by name in his genealogy (Matt 1:5). She also appears in the Bible's "Hall of Fame" for the faithful (Hebrews 11:31).*

Rahab is not only a living symbol of God's forgiveness and redemption; she is much more than that. She exemplifies the way that God delights in selecting for great service and prominence the humble and obscure, the very ones that the secular world would not even consider. And she exemplifies the principle that, if we humble ourselves before Him, He will also exalt us in due time⁵.

Why, when entering the city, the spies went to the home of a harlot is not known; perhaps Rahab was an inn-keeper; perhaps it was because her house was on the city wall with great visibility; and perhaps the Lord simply sent them there for reasons He did not bother to explain. Only He knows.

4. Where Have You People Been for the Past Forty Years?

Rahab reveals that the people of Jericho have been terrified at the thought of the Israelites for the past 40 years because they knew of the mighty miracles performed by the God of Israel. She tells the two spies what God had known all along: they could have had Jericho without a fight 40 years ago, if they had only trusted God⁶.

5. "Let's Make a Deal": a Mutual Protection Agreement. (2:12-24)

Rahab, knowing that the city will fall to the Israelites, agrees to protect and advise the spies if they will promise to protect her and her family when the city falls. They agree to protect all those who stay indoors, in the house marked by the scarlet rope; but those who venture out of the house may be killed⁷. She lets them down from the wall by the scarlet rope, they hide in the mountains as she advises, and return to report to Joshua.

NOTE: *In this passage the Hebrew word translated "line" means a rope, as in a lifeline. It is interesting to note that it is rendered "line" nowhere else*

⁵ I Peter 5:6.

⁶ In this conversation, one reason cited by Rahab for their fear of Israel's God is that they knew of the dividing and crossing of the Red Sea; here is one more bit of evidence that the crossing was of the Red Sea, not a marshy "reed sea."

⁷ This is highly symbolic of the first Passover, when the Israelites marked their houses with the blood of the lamb; all who stayed indoors ("under the [scarlet] blood") were spared, but any who ventured outdoors would die.

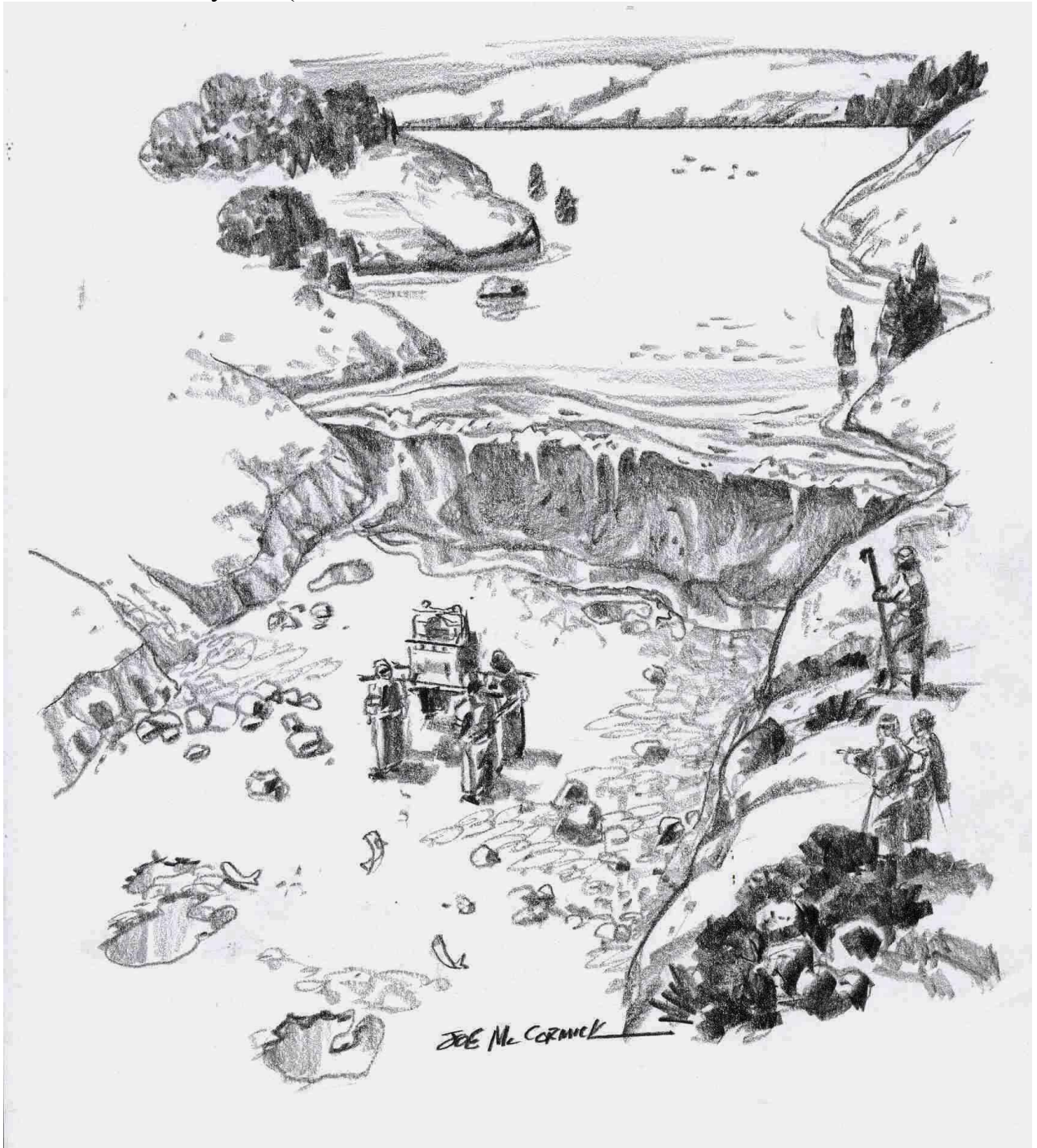
in the OT. In Ps 71:5 the same word is translated "hope." The passage is rich with symbolism anyway; and knowing this makes it even more rich.

6. Breaking Camp and Crossing the Jordan. (3:1-17)

The Lord reaffirms His promise to guide and support Joshua, as He had Moses, commands Joshua to take the people across the Jordan, and tells him that the waters will part to allow them to cross. It is in the Spring, and the Jordan is at flood stage, overflowing its banks and running at high speed. The Ark of the Covenant flowing as if an invisible dam had suddenly been dropped into place to their right, upstream. The water coming from upstream rises up in "an heap," and the water into which they had stepped flowed away downstream toward advance to the center of the streambed and halt. To avoid getting too close the Dead Sea, leaving the river bed where they stood, empty and dry⁸. They to the Ark of the Covenant, the people

⁸ The fact that the Israelites "passed over on dry ground," and didn't have to struggle over through deep mud in the riverbed, makes the miracle an even greater one.

cross over 1,000 yards (more than 1/2



And the priests that bare the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan...

Joshua 3:17a

mile) downstream from the Levites with the Ark. What an awesome leads, and as soon as its bearers step into the edge of the water the river stops moment it must have been for the people; but try to imagine what it was like for those four Levites, standing there at mid-stream in wet sandals, as the rushing water piled higher and higher, towering above them, only a few feet to their right. And, in spite of aching muscles and fear, they were not allowed to move, until all of the great multitude had crossed over. It must have been a major faith challenge! Even though the people "hasted over," it must have taken a long time for two-to-three million people to cross.

NOTE: It is interesting to note that an entire generation, born and reared during the 40 years of wilderness wanderings, had heard the story of the crossing of the Red Sea, but had not witnessed it. Now they are experiencing a comparable miracle for themselves. If nothing else, it is undeniable evidence that God is with Joshua and guiding him.

7. Two Memorials to the Miracle. (4:1-24)

Waiting with Joshua on the east river bank, twelve chosen men, one from each (non-Levite) tribe, are then sent into the river bed to pick up one large stone each from the place where the Levites stand with the Ark, and take them across, to the Jericho side; the stones are so large as to be carried on their shoulders--not in their hands. Then Joshua follows them into the river bed and piles up 12 more large stones as a monument, to mark the place where the four Levites still stand⁹. Finally Joshua, and the Levites carrying the Ark, cross the rest of the way across the river bed, climb up on the far bank, and the river flows as before, still at flood level, down into the Dead Sea. The Israelites camp at Gilgal, where Joshua has them pile up the 12 great stones that were carried across as a monument, to remind them, and future generations, of the great miracle God performed there¹⁰.

8. Circumcising Again. (5:1-9)

The Israelite boys had not been circumcised during the wilderness wandering, and immediately after crossing the Jordan, the Lord commands the circumcision of all uncircumcised males. At this point, only the males below age 20 when they left Egypt, plus Joshua and Caleb, are circumcised¹¹. Joshua has it done, and the Israelites stay in camp at Gilgal

⁹ At the time of the writing of Joshua (about 1435 BC) these stones could still be seen in mid-river.

¹⁰ The exact location of Gilgal is unknown; but it was between the Jordan River and Jericho.

¹¹ The previous circumcision, upon leaving Egypt, probably occurred during the first year, at Sinai.

while the men and boys heal¹². Although the Israelites would be at a great disadvantage if the Canaanites should attack them at this time, no such attack is made. God, of course, knows that the Israelites are safe from any attack, for the Canaanites are too afraid of Joshua and his men to mount one (actually, they were afraid of the God of the Israelites--not the Israelites).

NOTE: Since in verse 1 we are told that, at the news of the miraculous crossing of the Jordan, the Amorite kings' hearts "melted" with fear and they had no will to fight, one may wonder why Joshua didn't attack immediately. It is probably because, until the males were circumcised, they were not in compliance with the covenant and its promise of possessing Canaan. Once they were circumcised and in compliance with the covenant, they were assured of God's assistance and were eligible to receive the promise.

9. The End of the Manna. (5:10-12)

The Passover is kept on the 14th day of the first month. It has been 40 years, to the day, since they had celebrated that first Passover in Egypt. Prior to this the Israelites had probably not kept the feast, for in the wilderness they had no way to make unleavened bread--nor, for that matter, any kind of bread--for they had no grain to grind into meal or flour. But now, with the Canaanite people having fled into the city for protection, the Israelites can help themselves to all the grain they need, and they do. They feed on the Canaanite provisions, celebrate the Passover, and the Manna ceases, never to fall again.

10. An Awesome Visitor for Joshua. (5:13-6:5)

As Joshua prepares for the attack on Jericho, he receives an unexpected visit from a frightening man with drawn sword. The encounter is another experience for Joshua that seems to be a parallel to the key moments in the life of Moses; Joshua is told to take off his sandals, for he is on holy ground¹³. The Visitor (apparently the pre-incarnation Christ) identifies himself as "captain of the host of the LORD," and gives Joshua detailed instructions for the conquering of Jericho. We can only assume that Joshua, prostrated on the sand before the Visitor, listened carefully and said, "Aye, aye sir!"

NOTES:

¹² "Gilgal" is an emphatic form of the Hebrew word for "roll"; God gave the place the name because there the reproach (shame/uncleanness) of the people for being uncircumcised like the Egyptians was "rolled away."

¹³ See in this regard, Ex 3:5.

a. In the last highlight of the study guide to Deuteronomy I made the point that Moses was the only person, since sin entered the Garden of Eden, who had an ongoing “face-to-face” relationship with GOD. Although God speaks to Joshua from time to time, Joshua will receive his “face-to-face” divine guidance from One who appears to be the pre-incarnate Christ, Second Person of the Trinity. Theologians call these pre-incarnation appearances of Christ “Christophanies.” This could not have been an ordinary angelic messenger, for He accepted Joshua's worship. This is one criterion for determining whether a passage refers to an ordinary angelic messenger or an appearance of the pre-incarnation Christ (see, in comparison, Rev 22:8-9).

*b. Although, at times, it is difficult to be certain, as a general rule when the definite article is used in speaking of an angelic visitor (“**the** angel of the Lord”), the visitor is the pre-incarnate Christ. On the other hand, when the indefinite article is used (“**an** angel of the Lord), the visitor will probably be an ordinary, created, angelic being. This distinction is not made in the New Testament.*

11. An Absurd Attack with Stunning Success. (6:6-21)

As instructed by the angelic Visitor, Joshua has his army circle Jericho, led by seven priests blowing rams' horns ("shofars") and four more priests bearing the Ark of the Covenant. Except for the blowing of the shofars, the Israelites (as instructed) make no noise, nor do they even speak. For the defenders, watching from atop their city walls, it must have seemed an unbelievably absurd way to attack their city. In this way the Israelite army marches around the city, once each day, for six days. One can only imagine the insults and catcalls that must have come, increasingly, from the defenders on the walls; yet the Israelites neither reply to their insults nor speak a single word of any kind. As directed, on the seventh day they circle the city seven times, the seven priests blow "a long blast" with their shofars, and the people shout (at last--this must have been a mighty release for them). Supernaturally, the walls of Jericho fall outward, flat on the ground, and the Israelite army swarms into the city¹⁴. Obviously, the entire wall didn't fall, for it would have been unnecessary, and Rahab and family were still safely in their house atop the wall when the Israelites entered the city.

¹⁴ Excavations by Dr. John Garstang of the British School of Archeology in Jerusalem, and the Department of Antiquities of Palestine, excavated the ruins of Jericho (1930-36) and found that the walls had fallen outward, bringing with them the houses that had been on the top, exactly as described in Scripture.

The Israelite army was directed to burn Jericho and to take no spoil for themselves; the gold, silver, and vessels of brass and iron were to go to the treasury of the Tabernacle ("house of the LORD").

12. Rahab and Her Family Survive. (6:22-25)

The people of Jericho are "utterly destroyed," except for Rahab and her family. The two spies that she protected and helped to escape are sent into the city to rescue her; they bring her out, with her parents and the rest of the family, and give them a protected place to live, "outside the camp." At the time of the writing of Joshua, she was still living with the Israelites (6:25), where she married a Jew named Solomon ("Salmon"). According to Jewish tradition, the man she married had been one of the two spies whom she had rescued, although there is no scriptural evidence to confirm this.

NOTE: Rahab became the mother of Boaz, was Ruth's mother-in-law, great-grandmother of Jesse, and great-great-grandmother of David the King.

When we consider how God used and honored this former pagan harlot, ultimately to produce the Messiah, is there not hope for all the rest of us if we will repent and serve the LORD?

13. Things Go Sour at Ai. (6:26-7:26)

Joshua sends scouts farther into Canaan, to Ai, a small town northwest of Jericho¹⁵. The scouts return to report that Ai is small, and that the entire army will not be needed to conquer it ("...but let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai...for they are but few."). So Joshua sends 3,000 soldiers to attack this small and non-threatening place, but the men of Ai send the Israelite soldiers fleeing in disorder, back to Jericho. The men of Ai pursue them, killing 36 of Joshua's soldiers as they flee.

What should have been an easy victory becomes instead an ignominious defeat! What could have gone wrong? Joshua and the elders rend their garments, throw dust on their heads and fall on their faces before the Lord. The LORD, seemingly out of patience, tells them to get up and listen. The problem, He says, is that someone has disobeyed: in the capture of Jericho, someone has taken some of "the accursed thing" for himself and hidden it among his belongings. In order to retain the presence and protection of God they must clean up the mess--they must "destroy the accursed from among you." The next morning, led by the Spirit of God, Joshua identifies the tribe of Judah as the source of the trouble. Then he identifies the family, then the household, and then the guilty man, Achan. Achan confesses that in the battle for Jericho, he took for himself an expensive garment, some silver and

¹⁵ Ai is the only word in the Bible that is pronounced by spelling it.

some gold, and hid them in his tent. He, his family and possessions are stoned and burned, and a heap of stones is piled over them as a monument; it was still there when the book of Joshua was written.

NOTE: *two important principles are illustrated here:*

a. Our sin separates us from the presence and protection of God (see Isaiah 59:1-2); and

*b. There is a sequence of events in choosing to do the wrong thing, illustrated in 7:21: (1) we **see** the forbidden thing; (2) we **covet** it; (3) we **do** it; and then (4) we must **hide** it. But we can't hide it from God.*

14. Conquering Ai and Bethel. (8:1-29)

Now it is time to attack Ai, and to do it God's way. Directed by the LORD, Joshua sends by night an ambush force to take position on the back side of Ai and, the next morning, he leads the rest of his army to the gates of the city. When the army of Ai, reinforced by the army of Bethel (a sister city, only 1 1/2 miles away), come out to do battle, Joshua (as planned) pretends to retreat; the Canaanites, thinking that they will have another easy victory, pursue, leaving the city open and unguarded. Joshua's ambush force, as planned, enters the unguarded city and sets it on fire. When Joshua sees the smoke, the LORD tells him to stretch forth his spear toward the city, and the Israelites turn to attack the armies of Ai and Bethel. At the same time the Canaanites see the city burning, and find themselves surrounded by Joshua's army; attacked from three sides, they panic and are slaughtered. Joshua holds his spear, pointed toward the enemy, until the Canaanites are completely destroyed¹⁶. This time the LORD allows the Israelites to keep the spoil.

NOTE: *It is interesting that in the sacking of Jericho, the gold, silver and vessels of brass and iron were to be taken only for the treasury of the Tabernacle ("house of the LORD"). Yet here, the soldiers were allowed to take the cattle and the spoil for themselves. Perhaps this is a reflection of the principle that the first-fruits, of all kinds, were to be dedicated to the Lord, and such first-fruits foodstuffs went to the treasury of the Tabernacle (later the Temple).*

15. Deception by the Men of Gibeon and a League with Joshua. (Chapter 9)

The inhabitants of Gibeon, having heard of the victories of the Israelites east of Jordan, and at Jericho and Ai, west of the Jordan, engage in an

¹⁶ Here is another interesting parallel with Moses; in this battle Joshua is told to stretch forth his spear as God gives him victory, in the same way that Moses, on several occasions, was directed to stretch forth his rod. And, as in Moses' battle with Amalek, Joshua held his spear out until the battle was won.

elaborate deception. Pretending to be from a far place they convince Joshua by wearing ragged clothes and carrying moldy bread, to make a treaty (“league”) with them; the Gibeonites will be servants, doing menial service for the Israelites, who will in turn protect them. Joshua agrees to this commitment without asking the Lord; yet it seems not to have offended the LORD, for He will certainly step in with a unique miracle when Joshua follows through on his commitment, as we are about to see in Chapter 10. Three days after the agreement (league) is entered into, the truth is discovered; the people want to kill the Gibeonites for their deception; but Joshua and the elders honor their league and spare them¹⁷.

***NOTE:** In Chapt 9 (vv 9 and 24) we see another example of the fact that the pagans in the land had not only heard of YHWH, the mighty God of Israel, and of his miracles since the Exodus, but they also knew how to pronounce his name. Although I am reasonably certain that it is "YAHWEH," it is vexing to me that such pagans knew it, and yet we believers can't be certain. It will be one of my first questions in Heaven.*

16. The Sun and Moon Stand Still. (10:1-30)

The five kings of the Amorites, hearing of this, enter into a pact to make war on Gibeon for joining Israel, and move against it. Joshua and the Israelite army, honoring their treaty with Gibeon, attack the Amorite armies; with the LORD's promise of victory, they defeat the Amorites who flee before them. As the Amorites flee, the LORD kills many more of them with great hailstones¹⁸. Then, as daylight begins to fade, Joshua asks the LORD to lengthen the daylight so they can finish the slaughter; the Sun and the Moon stand still, giving light around Gibeon and the Valley of Ajalon for "about a whole day." The five Amorite kings are executed and hung on trees until sundown, then buried in a cave. This great miracle stands unique, unknown before, and never repeated.

NOTES:

***a.** Lengthening the day by approximately 24 hours, no matter how the LORD chose to do it, was a very great miracle. But it was no greater a miracle than the multiple miracles of Creation, and no greater than the miracle of the new birth and the new creature.*

¹⁷ The word “league” occurs 5 times in Chapt 9. The Hebrew word is “briyth” and it can be translated as a compact or agreement, a confederac , a league or a covenant. The context,, and Joshua’s response to the threat to the Gibeonites, suggest an agreement or commitment. The LORD however, still took it very seriously in the time of David, suggesting the permanency of a covenant (II Sam 21:1-14).

¹⁸ The LORD will again use giant hailstones to pour out his wrath upon evil people in the emptying of the 7th Bowl (Revelation 16-21).

In the records and legends of ancient cultures, including Egypt and Greece, there are references to a long day in the distant past. Records and legends of a long night in the ancient past exist among the American Indians, South Sea islanders and others in the Western Hemisphere.

For scientific possibilities discussed by a highly educated scientist and orthodox Christian, see Morris, Henry M., Ph.D, LL.D, Litt.D, "The New Defender's Study Bible," (Nashville, World Pub, 1995, 2006), commentary on Joshua 10.

b. Verse 13 refers to "the Book of Jasher"; it was apparently a book of songs and poems extolling great deeds in the lives of Israelite leaders. No copy of the Book of Jasher is known to exist today; it is thought to have disappeared at the time of final conquering of Jerusalem, and the destruction of the Temple, by Nebuchadnezzar. The only other reference to this book is in II Samuel 1:18.

17. Joshua Conquers the Rest of Canaan (Including the Giants). (11:15-23)

Joshua, in obedience, conquers all the rest of Canaan, including the territories of the sons of Anak (the Anakim), the giants whom the original 12 spies had seen 40 years earlier and reported to Moses. The campaign is finished in about seven years, although it is not complete. Some of the giants survive in the coastal area now called the Gaza Strip; and one of their descendants, Goliath, will later make history in a brief fight with David. The tribe of Judah fails to take Jebus (Jerusalem), and small groups of Canaanites remain elsewhere to cause trouble in the future¹⁹. Generally speaking, however, the Promised Land is conquered and divided among the tribes of Israel, and the last six words of Chapter 11 mark a significant milestone: "And the land rested from war."

18. Old Caleb vs the Giants of Hebron. (14:6-15)

Old Caleb who, with Joshua and 10 others, had been sent by Moses to reconnoiter Canaan, asks for the city and mountain of Hebron for his inheritance. The mountain is part of the land designated for the Tribe of Judah, and is the home of giants (Anakim). Caleb is now 85, but he is completely confident that he can conquer them. He tells Joshua that he is as strong at 85 as he was at 40 when he and the other spies first saw the giants, and that he can easily defeat them because the LORD will be with him. Joshua agrees, blesses him, and old Caleb charges up the mountain, cleans out the giants, and makes it his own. The name of the place is changed

¹⁹ See in this regard 10:1, 15:63, 16:10; 17:12.

from Kir-jath-arba ("city of Arba," father of Anak [15:13] and the other giants in that locale) to Hebron, which is still its name today.

***NOTE:** Hebron is one of the most important places in the Promised Land. Abram and his family dwelt there many years, his name was changed to Abraham there, Isaac was promised there, Isaac and Jacob spent most of their lives there, Sarah died and was buried there, as were Abraham, Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob and Leah. It became a Levitical city of refuge in Judah, and David reigned there for his first 7 1/2 years as king. In 1997 Hebron was divided, with much of it turned over to control by the Palestinian Authority. Upon taking control, the Arabs immediately desecrated the graves of the Patriarchs and all Christian shrines.*

19. Caleb's Nephew Follows His Uncle's Example. (15:13-19)

Keeping things in the family, Caleb offers to give his daughter, Achsah, as wife to anyone who could conquer the nearby city of Kir-jath-sepher. His nephew, Othniel, takes the place and marries Achsah, who must have been a wise, business-like lady. She enlarges their holdings by asking Caleb for additional land with springs of water, which he gives to her.

20. But Jebus (Jerusalem) Is Not Conquered. Interestingly, Joshua's army fails to conquer Jebus, capital of the Jebusites, and later called Jerusalem. This city is by far the most important in all of the Promised Land, with a history of central importance from the time of Abraham and Melchizedek to the present; yet, for some reason the tribe of Judah is unable to conquer it. It will remain for David to conquer Jebus, 400 years later, and make it his capital city. (15:63)

21. Headquarters at Shiloh and a Reconnaissance. (18:1-10)

Shiloh, a city about 25 miles north of Jerusalem (Jebus), is selected as headquarters for the Israelites, the Tabernacle is set up there, and there is no more organized resistance ("And the land was subdued before them.")²⁰. There are seven tribes that have not yet received their portions of the land, and three men are chosen from each. These 21 men are sent to reconnoiter the remaining land. The men return with a map, a written description (or both), with the territory divided into seven parts. Seeking guidance from the Lord, Joshua casts lots to decide which of the seven remaining tribes get which portions.

22. The Cities of Refuge. (20:1-9)

²⁰ The Tabernacle would remain at Shiloh for the rest of Joshua's life, and during the entire period of Judges. It would remain for David, after establishing his capital at Jerusalem, to move it there.

As one of his last acts, Moses had chosen three of the six cities of refuge, east of the Jordan River: Bezer, Ramoth in Gilead and Golan. After the dividing of the land is completed, the remaining three cities of refuge are designated, west of the Jordan: Kedesh in Galilee, Shechem and Hebron.

23. "And the Lord Gave Them Rest...." (21:1-3, 43-45)

Chapter 21 describes the 48 Levitical cities; these cities, and their surrounding pasture land, are set aside for the priests and Levites to live in. With that final administrative matter settled, all that the LORD had promised was fulfilled by Him. There was no more resistance from the Canaanites, for "the Lord had delivered all their enemies into their hand."²¹ And so the LORD gave them rest--peace, and time to set up their homes and lands and settle into their new lives in the Promised Land.

24. An Altar East of the Jordan. (22:10-29, 32-34)

The tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh settle in on the east side of the Jordan, and quickly do a strange thing: they build an altar on their side of the river. The rest of the Israelites assume that the altar is to be for pagan sacrifices, and prepare to go to war. Investigation proved, however, that the 2 1/2 tribes east of the river were just feeling separated, and had built the altar to the Lord as a symbol of unity with their fellow Israelites west of the Jordan in Canaan.

NOTE: In v 34 we are told that this altar of declared unity and faithfulness to the LORD was given a name, "Ed." The word is Hebrew for "a witness." The word is in italics, meaning that it was inserted by the AV translators. It is not in the Masoretic Hebrew OT, from which the OT of the AV, and most other Bible versions were (and are), translated. The word does appear in a few ancient manuscripts and in the Syriac and Arabic texts; so, it appears that the AV translators inserted it to make very clear the meaning and purpose of the altar which had almost led to a civil war.

25. Joshua's Farewell. (23:1-13; 24:1, 14-28)

Many years of peace and prosperity pass and Joshua, knowing that the time of his death is near, calls for the people to gather at Shechem where he has lived, and he makes a farewell address. The one most important thing for them to do is to eschew paganism and obey the Law of Moses. He warns them not even to speak the names of the pagan gods. In an often-quoted passage, he challenges the people to follow his example and to

²¹ Yes, the Lord had delivered all the pagans into the hands of the Israelites; the only problem was that the Israelites had not completely destroyed the pagans delivered into their hands. This failure would never cease to plague the Israelites in the centuries to come.

choose to follow the LORD (YHWH). Then the people promise to serve only the LORD (a promise that they, and their descendants would consistently fail to keep), Joshua writes his farewell address, and sets up a great stone as a monument ("witness") to their commitment. The people return to their homes and Joshua dies at age 110²².

26. The Death of Joshua and the End of an Era. (24:29-33)

The people remain faithful to the Lord as long as Joshua and the elders who served under him lived, but all that is about to change.

Eleazer the High Priest dies and is replaced by his son, Phinehas. This point, at the end of the book of Joshua, may be thought of as the end of an era. The Exodus from Egypt and settlement in the Promised Land are completed, and the promise to bury Joseph in Shechem with his ancestors is fulfilled.

***Note:** the body of Joseph, which the Israelites have carried with them ever since leaving Egypt, is finally buried with his father in Shechem, in the burial ground that Jacob had bought so long before. It took about 300 years for this promise to Joseph to be fulfilled²³.*

²² As previously noted, it is obvious that without a miracle Joshua, having died, could not have written the last five verses. It is generally believed that Eleazar wrote vv 29-31, and that his son, Phinehas, wrote vv 32-33.

²³ *Genesis 50:25.*