

Unfolding Unveiling: Studies of Christ Revealed in the Types of Joshua, David, and Solomon

Part Two: Joshua

Chapter Six: The Seeds of Future Problems

We have seen the gloriousness of life under Joshua in direct contrast to the misery of life in the wilderness. Israel had successfully made the transition from a flesh-dominated viewpoint to a Spiritual one. For this reason – that under the leadership of the revealed Lord of glory we enter into the place He has prepared for us – of the three types we will study in this book, Joshua holds a glory all His own. Not only did Israel identify in Christ Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection at the crossing of the Jordan; they had consistently maintained a victorious lifestyle over a period of years as they fought to take possession of the Land. What a contrast to the constant episodes of rebellion, murmuring, and idolatry that characterized their wilderness wandering as a time of defeat!

Nevertheless, to make our study of Israel's time under Joshua complete, we must consider the sizable body of passages that point to troubling times that are yet to come. In and of themselves, the events we will quickly examine do not seem serious; however, when we will have covered more of Israel's history and then have stopped to turn and gaze back at the place from where they had come, we will see that the seeds of so many of their problems will have been sown, even while Joshua was still alive.

Some Inhabitants Remain

With that, let us look once again at the book of Joshua, where we will see that even after so much ground has been taken, after so many hard-fought battles won, there were incidents which give cause for concern. There are passages of Scripture in Joshua that will give us an idea of things to come. Joshua 13:1-6 show that there is a great portion of Land yet to be taken. The Lord did not disapprove because Israel was progressing as they should, and it was time to divide the Land. And yet scattered throughout the account of the dividing of the Land are little verses that run thus: "...Nevertheless the children of Israel expelled not the Geshurites, nor the Maacathites..." (13:13), "...As for the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out..." (15:63), "But the Canaanites... have become slaves to do forced labor..." (16:10), "...Yet the children of Manasseh could not drive out the inhabitants of those cities..." (17:12). How could this be? For years Israel had been living in consistent victory, and now they are unable to maintain their victory?

Sometimes, instead of continuing to fight the inhabitants, Israel yielded to them and dwelt among them. Joshua 15:63 says that Jebusites and the children of Judah dwelt together in Jerusalem. This was no standoff with Judah trying to take the city; no, they

were living together with the inhabitants. What makes this situation even more interesting is that in 12:10 there is a list of the kings and cities that Joshua defeated, and Jerusalem is one of them. Israel fought the Jebusites once and beat them, but it must not have been a complete victory because by chapter 15, Israel was living with them in the city. They lost their victory. Joshua 16:10 says that Ephraim permitted the Canaanites to dwell among them as slaves when they could not be driven out. The book of Deuteronomy was quite clear that Israel was not to live with the inhabitants of the Land, and yet this early in their history, they are already compromising on this point.

This is not an exhaustive list, but it is enough to give the reader an idea of the problem at hand. For reasons that are not always clear, Israel could not – or simply did not – continue to drive out the inhabitants. Sometimes the Scriptures do not say why; at other times they are clear, such as in 17:16, which says, “...The hill is not enough for us; and all the Canaanites that dwell in the land of the valley have chariots of iron...” Ephraim felt that the task at hand was too difficult for them, that to drive out those inhabitants with superior military armory was a charge too burdensome.

For the first time, we now have a breach between Israel and their leader, whom they had followed so closely during their military campaigns. They were not keeping the Word in their mouths and in their hearts (cf. Deut. 30:12-14, Josh. 1:8). They are in conflict with the Word of the Lord because they were being influenced by their adverse circumstances. Perhaps after winning so many decisive victories they were confused by these inhabitants who were not so easily dispossessed. But Joshua reminded them that the Word of God had not changed. He said that Israel would drive out the inhabitants, and so they would. He encouraged them to continue in the Word of the Lord. It is important to remember these Canaanites with their chariots of iron and the trouble they caused Israel, because they will be mentioned again in years to come.

Slow to Obey

The passage which contains this very Scripture leads us right into another cause for concern, to quote Joshua himself, was that Israel was “tardy to go to possess the Land,” (18:3). They were not driving out the inhabitants as quickly as the captain of their salvation would have liked. Our next point, then, is that Israel was beginning to divert from implicit obedience to the word of the Lord. The purpose of the book of Deuteronomy, as we have seen, was to give Israel His Word, by which, if they kept it, they would have been able to take the Land. This was clearly explained to Israel in chapter one of the Book of Joshua. The implication is there that if Israel did not keep His Word, that they would not succeed in taking the Land.

God’s Word never changed throughout the book of Joshua. Even on his deathbed, the captain of their salvation was exhorting Israel to continue in the same purpose (to possess the Land), and by the same means (by adhering to the Word of the Lord [cf. Josh. 23:6-10]). And yet we have the two half tribes all but chiding Joshua in 17:14-18 for not being given a large enough possession. They felt hemmed in by the inhabitants which they were unable to drive out. In so doing, they were in effect contradicting the Word of the Lord,

which was that they were well able to possess the Land. Joshua had to remind them of the truth as it is in Jesus, as if it had slipped away from them. While not a huge incident, this breach between the Lord's Word and His people will become serious if not corrected shortly.

A Misunderstanding

The final incident that betrays some problems that are not addressed under Joshua's leadership is found in 22:10-34, which is the account of a misunderstanding over a memorial erected by the tribes on the east side of the Jordan. The little misunderstanding would have ended in war between the children of Israel had the priest not intervened. It is well that they were able to resolve the situation, but it is rather serious that such a miscommunication would arise in the first place, and that Israel's first solution for such a problem was to go to war against his brethren. Israel's faulty conclusions about his brethren and his rash attempts to correct the perceived idolatry point to a sobering lack in their knowledge of the Lord. As we shall see, these problems, while subtle and seemingly harmless during our time under Joshua, will not manifest fully until a later time and will likewise not be addressed or answered under Joshua, but at a greater unveiling of Christ. This situation speaks to what the seeing of Christ as Joshua does not accomplish in our lives and why it is so important to continue on to know the Lord.

In chapter 23, Joshua, in his last meeting with the leaders of Israel, gives them a solemn warning. He is not wholly at peace at the time of his death. He knows that Israel has the potential to begin to move out of the way of the Lord. In verse five, he says that they shall drive the inhabitants out of their sight. Joshua is speaking of comprehension, of viewpoint. We are to drive the inhabitants out of our sight. We are to see Jesus only. In verse six of chapter 23, he is still saying the very same thing that he was saying in chapter one. Israel is to be strong and very courageous. The plan is still the same. Joshua is still Joshua; Jesus is still Jesus. In verse 7, they are to do this so that they will not mix with the nations that they are to drive out.

To summarize, we see a breach between the Word of the Lord and Joshua on one side, and Israel's lack of unbelief due to their focusing upon circumstances on the other. They begin to question the Word of the Lord. We see that Joshua is concerned about this very thing and warns them while lying on his deathbed. We see that Israel both could not and did not drive the inhabitants out, and they were dwelling together by the time Joshua died. They were negligent concerning the Word of the Lord. And we see the potential for division between the tribes.

They had entered the Land and begun to be established in it, and yet there were still issues that had remained unaddressed, that would wreak havoc in their lives in the future. The book of Joshua ends on this note: "So Joshua let the people depart, every man unto his inheritance," (24:28). This important statement is the bridge between the books of Joshua and Judges. After studying the book of Judges, we will be able to look back on these things in light of our studies and realize that the book of Joshua was the starting point of all their problems.

Seeing Joshua did not take care of all of Israel's problems. Seeing Jesus is not a panacea that removes all potential for deception and error in the heart of the believer. There are greater seeings of Christ that will destroy more of the enemies of God. Joshua did not take care of all the enemies. When he died, there were still inhabitants left in the Land. We must remember, too, that this is only a picture. The enemies, in reality, are inside the believer, fighting against Christ being revealed. The carnal mind is the enemy of God (cf. Rom. 8:7). Here we see a little foreshadowing of what will be happening in the book of Judges. Israel's huge failures in Judges started with small issues in Joshua, and they gained momentum. Seeds are sown here which will mature into a harvest.