

APRIL 15

Joshua 11-12

Believe it or not, today we finish up the conquest of the land. In terms of discipleship, there is a phrase that does point to something interesting. It is Joshua's claim to fame. It is one of those things that doesn't require a lot of skill or genius or talent. God kind of leveled the playing field when He called us to His side to work with Him in the harvest. The essential quality of a disciple is to hear the Word of God and to do it. That's what Jesus said. As you read, look for and underline where it says that Joshua obeyed. We can all love and obey the Lord, as we follow Him in the harvest.

Joshua 11

Vs. 1-5 The kings of northern Canaan come against Joshua and the Lord. Again, this is the irrationality of sin. These people knew what God had done, but still chose to fight. That's what makes us human I guess.

Vs. 6-9 Here again we see God promising Joshua victory and Joshua warps into high gear. Joshua took the fight to the kings. It is interesting to see God command that all of the war horses were to be maimed and military gear was to be destroyed. If we have the Lord, we don't need the enemies' resources. You think of all the time and money Solomon invested in horses and chariots and understand what a show and waste that was. God was showing Israel and the nations that He was more than enough.

Vs. 10-15 Here are a couple of other things about Joshua. First, he destroyed the royal city, the symbol of might, and let the other cities stand. That was good strategy. Next, he regarded Moses as the servant of the Lord and honored Moses' work. Finally, Joshua totally obeyed. It will be an honor to meet Joshua someday.

Vs. 16-20 These victories were God's judgment on Canaan. We've mentioned before that He had shown hundreds of years of patience and had men like Melchizedek and Abraham live as witnesses among them. We know that there is a personal aspect to a person hardening their heart to God and then God encouraging the further hardening of heart. In both Rahab and the Gibeonites, we see that people were open to turn to God if they desired to turn to Him. In reality, God called these people into His presence to give account. God's presence is a place of ultimate blessing and privilege, unless you don't like God.

Vs. 21-23 It is kind of an interesting note that when Joshua broke the military might of Canaan, he also destroyed most of the giants. Remember, it was the presence of the Anakim that the 10 spies used to frighten the people. You notice the city of Gath. That will be the city that Goliath comes from.

As God said earlier, He doesn't remove every point of resistance. If He did, the land would waste away and wild animals would take over. It will take time for Israel to move into their inheritance. But what happened yesterday, and is happening today, is the breaking of military power in the land. From this point on, all that is left are small towns and cities that *could* easily be taken by each tribe. The "could" will be a sad commentary on Israel. Israel will remain true to the Lord during the life of Joshua and the elders; but after their influence is gone, Israel will sin, and some of these towns and cities that could easily have been removed will remain. Without God's blessing, even the smallest influence will overwhelm them, because like us, our strength is in the Lord. If the Lord is not present and we are not close to Him, we cannot fulfill the purpose for our lives or our mission on earth. Regarding our work in the harvest, Jesus said, "Without me, you can do nothing." If we "do nothing" it is because we have lost touch with Him and are living without Him.

Joshua 12

Vs. 1-6 This is a summary of the victories under Moses' leadership.

Vs. 7-24 These are the victories under Joshua's leadership.

Luke 17:11-37

Vs. 11-19 This is kind of funny to read because Jesus is on His way to Jerusalem, but heading east and He'll eventually cross the Jordan. Jerusalem was straight south. The shortest distance between two points is always God's way. There are some great lessons in all of this. Only Luke has this story, and it is the second time he has reported the cleansing of lepers. This story has a twist.

Vs. 13-14 Notice that they had faith. For them to yell this to Jesus showed they were aware of Jesus' power. The fact that they went when He told them also shows faith.

Vs. 15-16 This guy was overcome with thanks and went all worshipful. He couldn't help himself. So, how did they know he was a Samaritan? Did they wear name tags? But now you see why Luke included this story.

Vs. 16-19 Being overcome with gratitude and worship doesn't have to be commanded. The others obeyed Jesus, but this man showed overwhelming love.

Luke was a Gentile, and a companion and personal physician to the apostle Paul. I'm sure Luke had experienced the conflicts Paul was constantly facing from the Jews and Jewish Christians (many of whom were former Pharisees who had been saved) who wanted the Gentile believers to take on Jewish custom and practice. Luke is showing his Gentile readers that the Lord Himself honored the outcasts who worshiped with simple faith and devotion.

Vs. 20-21 Now in contrast, we see the Pharisees. Jesus had already said that the kingdom would be invisible like that mustard seed or like yeast in flour. That the kingdom was in the midst of them was Jesus Himself. The import of this episode is that the Pharisees sought to challenge Jesus, and once they heard His cryptic answer, they left, shaking their heads.

V. 22 I think as the Pharisees left, Jesus knew His followers would face deep persecution because of the kind of unbelief expressed by men like these. In light of that kind of persecution and scorn, there would come a time when the disciples would desire to see one day of God's vindication, one day of what it would look like when the Son of Man comes in judgment. But, that time is for the end and they will have to take it by faith that it will be a judgment on mankind that will account for all harm done by the powers of unbelief.

Notice the plural *days*. The *days of the Son of Man* are the entire seven-year period of the Tribulation.

Vs. 23-25 During those days, many will claim "Jesus sightings," or claim to be the Messiah. The disciples are to ignore these claims. *In His day* is the actual day of His bodily return. This sign is for His disciples at that point in history, letting them know that they won't have to go anywhere to find Jesus. They don't have to go running to find the false Messiahs that will crop up. Every person on the planet will see Him. The event won't be hidden and it won't look like normal lightning and they won't have to tune into CNN to figure it out. Also, they are not to be lured out into the open. The advent of false Messiahs might also mean that many people living through the Tribulation, even unbelieving people, will have a religious, although warped, understanding of the Tribulation. But in the end, only having a relationship with Jesus will count. The elect will live by obedience to this command.

Vs. 26-29 Using both the flood of Noah, and Lot and the destruction of Sodom, Jesus shows there was a time factor from the sudden beginning of the event to the destruction. Once Noah entered the ark and the rain began to fall, life as they knew it ended. Once the angels arrived in

Sodom and Lot left the city, nothing was ever the same. Once the destruction begins during the Tribulation, although seven years will pass before Christ's return, normal life will have ended. If you read Revelation you'll see that the disasters of the first 3.5 years will break down the entire network and technology of the world. The entire planet will become "third world," and that might be more advanced than things will actually be.

Vs. 30-33 These verses seem to parallel what Jesus says later regarding the middle of the Tribulation and the desecration of the temple. That will begin a time of unparalleled persecution of the Jews and Christians over the entire earth.

On the other hand, since there is no reference here to the antichrist, it could be that Jesus is applying this to the entire time of the Tribulation. Those who think to save anything during that time will end up losing everything. Notice in v. 30 that it talks about a particular "day." On that day the Son of Man is revealed. This could be talking about the beginning of the Tribulation. It will be through the entire Tribulation, as the Lord opens those seals, that He is revealed and makes His judgment of the earth manifest.

Interestingly, in v. 33, Jesus uses a phrase that He's used before regarding the cost of discipleship. I find this pretty interesting, to think He used the same images with slightly different meanings in different contexts.

Vs. 34-37 At first glance, this summary note by Jesus could be talking about the time of persecution of the Jews and Christians. The implication would be that they should have obeyed what Jesus has just said and should have run for the hills. In that case, it wouldn't seem that these verses could apply to the rapture.

On the other hand, when Jesus was talking about His return, the three points He consistently emphasized and repeated were that the time was unknown, that the time would come suddenly and that the sign of His appearing would be in the sky. The reference to the eagles (*vultures*) is in answer to where these people would be taken. Since a corpse is mentioned it seems that there is judgment in view. Yet if you look at the next reference to the "eagles" in the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24:28 (two days before His death) it is clear that the only thing Jesus is using the eagles for is to tell the disciples where to look, that is, up. The sign of His coming will be in the sky. If you were wondering where a corpse was, you would look in the sky to see where the vultures were. The sign was in the sky. Close to the time of Jesus' coming, there will be many impersonators and people will be deceived into looking for Jesus in many places. In both Matthew 24:28 and here, the only place to look will be "up." From this, I would say that Jesus is saying these will be taken into the air.

Since these are the final words of this teaching and a parable is about to follow, I think Jesus is referring to the beginning of the "day" of His coming, that is, the beginning of the Tribulation and what Paul is referring to in 1 Corinthians 15:50-52 and 1 Thessalonians 4:16. However, if you read Revelation 19:11-21 you will find the Lord arriving at the battle with His people (the ones taken?) who have been instantly gathered from all the nations. These believers will not be resurrected or changed, but will follow Christ into the battle at Armageddon, where He will feed His enemies to the birds (vultures). These same believers will follow Christ into the Millennial Kingdom. I mention this only to say that there is some leeway here for another interpretation.

Notice that there is no v. 36. Apparently some copyist added it later to parallel the Olivet Discourse in Matthew. We have so many manuscripts of the NT that these are easy to find.

As disciples, we need to be careful to submit our lives and expectations to the Lord and His Word. These events are coming and the Democrats and Republicans in the USA will have nothing to do with it. Our passion has to be to keep our hearts free of civilian affairs so we can please the One who enlisted us. We follow Him in His harvest to reach those for whom He shed His blood as the storm clouds gather.

Psalm 84

According to the Bible Knowledge Commentary-OT, p. 855, this is a “pilgrim” psalm, meaning it was sung by the processions of people being led into Jerusalem for the feasts. It was a song that helped the people tune their hearts to worship. Though these songs were written by the sons of Korah, they may have been influenced by David. One of David’s passions was organizing Israel around the worship of God. As soon as he could, David brought the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem because it signified the presence of God. David’s longing, particularly after the long years of running, was to dwell with God. We’ve seen these recurring themes in David’s songs: dwelling with the Lord, finding strength in God, pleading that God would hear our prayer.

Vs. 1-4 It is interesting to me that God made us to dwell with Him in the garden. Whether it was David or Paul, as they grew in their faith they desired more and more to be in God’s presence.

Vs. 5-7 What an interesting way to express strength. All the ways of our hearts lead to God’s presence. It takes a while to learn this, but when God is our only desire, instead of living from bump to bump, we go from strength to strength as our hearts “appear” before Him.

Vs. 8-9 This is the only “crying out” in this psalm. It is the constant affirmation of those on this earth who recognize this separation from God because of sin, and desire this day to be over.

Vs. 10-12 Why wouldn’t we be content to serve at the door if it meant being in His presence? In that service all of our needs are met with favor, light and safety. Just reading this challenges my heart.

Proverbs 13:5-6

What strikes me is the connection in v. 5 of falsehood, shame and disgrace. The latter two are a good reason to be truthful. Our deceptions find us out. Jesus warned the disciples to count on it.

V. 6 Righteousness is not a practical means to an end. It is living to please God. In gratefulness we desire to live in a way that expresses our gratitude to God and reflect His goodness. The fact that righteousness protects us is just collateral blessing.