

APRIL 17

Joshua 15

Vs. 1-12 This is a long chapter having to do with the land given to Judah. Judah is basically given the southern half of the country, from Jerusalem in the north to Kadesh-barnea in the south, and from the Dead Sea to the Mediterranean Sea. That land portion was so huge that three other tribes would be given pieces of it, but eventually Simeon and Benjamin were absorbed into Judah, and Dan went rogue and took land in the north. This was a royal share of the land, which later allowed Judah to become a kingdom unto itself.

Vs. 13-19 And then there were those pesky giants. This story having to do with Caleb is conspicuous by its presence. Caleb's daughter was given the southern desert (thanks, Dad!) and needed the water rights. The real impact of this story is that this is the first time we find the name of Othniel. He is a fearsome dude and unafraid of giants. He is also the first judge in the book of Judges.

Vs. 20-63 There are a lot of names of cities here, but be encouraged. After you have read through your one-year Bible a few years, some of these will begin to stand out. One of the things that hit me reading this year is the number of enemy cities "given" to Judah. It would be like receiving the gift of Baghdad or Tehran. Many of these cities would be grave enemies of Israel for the next 400 years.

V. 31 Just for trivia and because I never saw this before, notice the town of Ziklag. When David finally got tired of being chased by King Saul, he headed to live among the Philistines in Ziklag. King Achish gave Ziklag to David. How funny, because this town was originally supposed to belong to Judah. It won't be until the reign of David that the power of the Philistines is broken and these cities are under the rule of Israel.

V. 33 Notice the names of these cities. When you get to the story of Samson, you'll see these cities because all of the adventures of Samson (tribe of Dan) really take place in the land of Judah.

Vs. 45-47 These are the cities of the Philistines which will loom large until David is on the throne. It is sad to think that if the people had kept following the Lord, God would have given them victory over these awesome enemies. The people were not to rest until the job was done. By deciding not to press forward, they fell backward. Instead of commanding the land and doing God's work, Judah would be ruled by the Philistines.

V. 63 There are many mentions of the Jebusites who lived in Jerusalem. It wouldn't be until David was king that Jerusalem would belong to Israel and become the city of David. They actually taunted David, from the wall, that he wouldn't be able to take the city. Bad choice. Of course the Jebusites had about 350 years (Judges to David being king) of experience seeing Israel flounder around in the land and fail. They hadn't been confronted by a man who was following God and who really wanted that city. Caleb apparently never personally tried to take the city, and Othniel lived south of Jerusalem in the desert.

In my thinking, the parallel to us as disciples is that we have been left here to work. Rest is coming. If we rest now and settle into life on earth, it overwhelms and defeats us. All of the blessing and strength the Lord promises us is in bearing our cross, following Him in the harvest, reaching the lost and making disciples, who make disciples. When we stop doing that and try to turn our calling into a comfortable Christianity, we become weak and at the mercy of our own sin, the enemy's influence and the culture's attractions. Worst of all, we are no longer following our Lord in the harvest, drawing on the strength and closeness He promises. For Israel and us, living in Canaan, without moving forward, means defeat.

Luke 18:18-43

Vs. 18-30 Many of the last illustrations Jesus has used have to do with the Pharisees or rich people (the Pharisees were rich too). We know this guy as the rich young ruler. The designation of "ruler" means he was probably a ruler of a synagogue.

V. 22 I don't think that the young man would have "gained" treasure in heaven by selling everything, but it would have shown that his true treasures were already in heaven. It would have made his true treasure clearly identifiable. Notice too that Jesus wanted him to give the money to the poor. This kind of action also shows your attitudes toward the poor. The Pharisees actually despised the poor, thinking their sin and laziness were their real problems. I think we do that too.

V. 25 The word for needle that Luke uses is a surgical or sewing needle. If being rich makes being saved almost impossible, I wonder what being fully supplied and sufficient does for us as disciples? Just a thought.

V. 26 If you put Matthew, Mark and Luke together on this story, you get a different impression. The Twelve are completely shocked and overwhelmed at what Jesus said. The impact of the story is that having anything that qualifies as "riches" can make salvation impossible. Their shock was very deep. Again, it makes me wonder how we can play with being rich and still think we can be fully engaged in the harvest. We might be fooling ourselves.

V. 27 God apparently has an antidote. I'll bet it doesn't taste good.

Vs. 28-30 This is a short version of Jesus telling them to "seek ye first." God will more than make up for what we "give up" in following Jesus in the harvest. This is a very strong promise, and I know very few people in the western world who could live like this. But this is what Peter and the rest realized that Jesus was calling them to. Again, putting Matthew, Mark and Luke together gives you a fuller picture.

Vs. 31-34 Jesus had been heading toward Jerusalem in a round-about way. At this point, His GPS is no longer saying, "recalculating." Interestingly, Jesus had been in the region of Judah that extended (at that time) to the east side of the Jordan. He had now crossed over the Jordan and was going "up" toward Jerusalem. All roads led "up" to Jerusalem. His first stop was Jericho. This sort of sounds like Joshua.

Mark 10:32 says that Jesus was walking on ahead and they were all terrified. This talk that Jesus is having with His disciples is very serious, but they don't get it. I have a feeling that if we had been there, we wouldn't have understood either. Maybe the disciples thought, "With all Jesus was able to do, and knowing how true and good He was, how could anything like this possibly happen to Him? How could God allow it?" Sometimes you just follow without "getting it."

Vs. 35-43 I always enjoy this story. The crowd tells the blind man, *Jesus of Nazareth is passing by*, but Bartimaeus cries out, *Son of David*. Everyone who ever referred to Jesus as the Son of David in the Bible was neither "blind" nor wrong. What guts he had to keep crying out. In v. 43 Bartimaeus is following Jesus and glorifying God. And, the crowd that was following *Jesus of Nazareth* is now praising God.

It excites me to think that in any crowd, there might be a "Bartimaeus" sitting there, hidden in poverty or something else, waiting to be called to follow Jesus in the harvest.

Psalm 86

Vs. 1-7 This is the heart of David. All of the things God had taught David through years of struggles seem to be reflected in what he says here. God gave David many deliverances that nurtured his faith, but it was a long time before God fully delivered David. As a result of God leading David through trials, David had developed this heart and we are now blessed with this testimony.

Vs. 8-10 David understood that God was not only in control, but that all the nations would praise Him.

Vs. 11-13 This is what David needed in his current trials. He needed to be taught in God's Word and to fear His name. David needed a heart of thanks, and he needed the comfort of God's *steadfast love*. I could use all of those right now; in fact, that might be what the Spirit wants to tell me as I read this.

Vs. 14-15 This is the contrast between those who are pressing David and the security David knows he has in the Lord.

Vs. 16-17 I can really identify with this request. What do I specifically need? I don't know, but I really need God's presence, His grace, His strength and His help. It would be great for the Lord to bless with the kind of encouragement and visual acknowledgement that would let people who are questioning and doubting know that we are truly following Him. That would be more than enough, and that can only come from Him, not us.

As disciples, we "rejoice and exult" in our trials according to Romans 5. That is because the Holy Spirit is in us pouring the love of God our Father into our hearts. This is the love shown in what our Lord has done for us. The Spirit turns what once were deadly and dangerous circumstances for our souls, into steps of growth and victory: proof that we belong to Him and are under His care.

Proverbs 13:9-10

We often think of the wise man in terms of someone we seek who has deep, balanced, experienced insights into life and the actions of people. We don't usually think of the wise man as one who has learned to take advice.