

Week 13

March 26 - April 1

Joshua 12:7-24:33; Judges 1:1-6:40; 1 Chronicles 6:54-81

The theme for this week is “living as foreigners.” In John 17:14, Jesus says that we who are His followers are not of this world. We are going to explore some of the ways in which Israel’s early years living in the Promised Land parallels our experience of living as God’s children in a broken and sinful world that is not our home.

March 26th

Joshua 12:7-15:19. "Slaying Giants"

45 years after giving a positive report on the Promised Land, Caleb finally has his opportunity to conquer the land that God had promised to him (Numbers 14:24). In chapter 14 Caleb senses his opportunity to ask permission to take this land. It is not a simple task, though, since the Anakites (a race of giants) live there. However, Caleb's faith at 85 years old is still as strong as it was at 40, and he knows he will conquer if the Lord is with him.

Caleb did not fear the giants that stood between him and God's blessings. He knew that his Lord is a mighty warrior and greater than the Anakites.

What are the 'giants' in your life that must be defeated in order for you to experience the fullness of God's blessing? Maybe it is lust or pride or selfishness that has you defeated. Caleb had faith that when the Lord was with him there was no enemy too great. We can approach our 'giants' in the same way.

March 27th

Joshua 15:20-17:18. "Contentment"

In Joshua 17:14 – 18, the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, who are descended from Joseph, come to Joshua to complain about the amount of land they have received. To me it seems as though Joshua is very considerate in his response, giving them a couple of options and then encouraging them to drive out the remaining Canaanites in order to receive more land.

I don't think my response would have been as understanding as Joshua's. When it comes to receiving God's blessing it seems rather presumptuous to complain about the amount that God gives. This attitude represents a lack of contentment with God's provision and blessing. Even though this world is not our home, God's blessings and provision in this world are very real. Do you sometimes find yourself ill content and complain to God regarding his provision for you? If so, remember these two things: first, as co-heirs with Christ, our full inheritance is not in this life but in the life to come; and second, God's provision in this life is real and is fully sufficient for all our needs.

March 28th

Joshua 18:1-19:48. "Future Blessing"

Right now, you and I are living as foreigners or aliens in this world. We long for the day when our Savior will call us home. The Israelites taking possession of the Promised Land can be viewed as a picture of our future entrance into Heaven. Their time in the wilderness then would be parallel to our time in this broken and fallen world. Their crossing of the Jordan River the image of Christian baptism, and then the receiving of the Promised Land is like our receiving of God's blessings in Heaven.

In today's reading we see how the remaining tribes of Israel receive their allotment of land. It was not based on their requests or wishes, but it was solely based on God's guiding of their casting lots.

As I ponder how this parallels the blessings God has in store for us, his children, I realize three truths. First, I will not be able to tell God what blessing or reward I want. Second, the decision to bless is entirely the Lord's sovereign choice. And third, no matter what blessing the Lord gives, it will be absolutely amazing and perfect in every way.

March 29th

Joshua 19:49-21:45; 1 Chronicles 6:54-81. "The Merciful and Gracious God"

Our God is a god of justice and righteousness who cannot allow sin to go unpunished. This has been very evident in the readings of the law where we see God's high standards of holiness and moral living. However, our God is also "the merciful and gracious God." He is "slow to anger and rich in unfailing love and faithfulness" (Exodus 34:6). I think that the concept of the cities of refuge is a wonderful example of these character traits of God.

In the Noahic Covenant in Genesis 9, God declares that anyone who commits murder must be killed (Genesis 9:5b-6). Now in Joshua 20 we see God exercising grace and compassion on those who have killed unintentionally.

As Christian brothers and sisters we continue to live with a sin nature that creeps up on us now and then. Fortunately, the Merciful and Gracious God who established the cities of refuge is that same God whom we can go to for grace and forgiveness when we sin.

March 30th

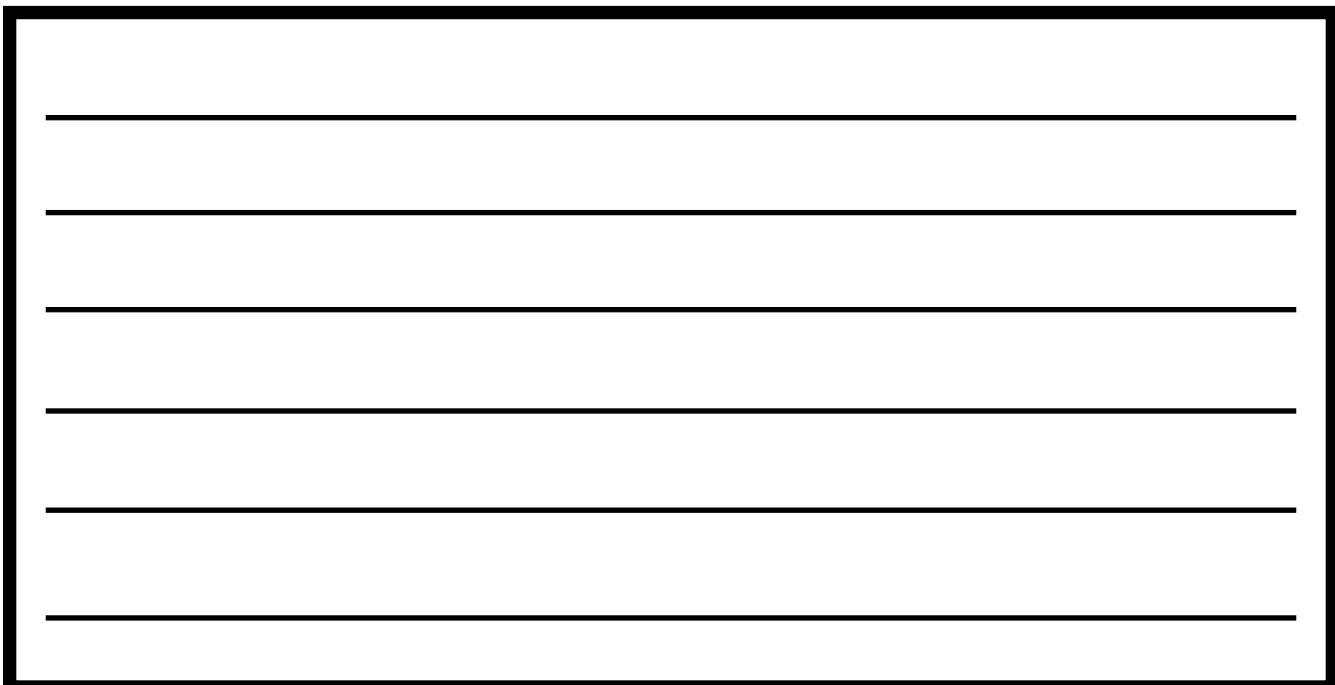
Joshua 22-24. "In the World, not of the World"

"I have given them your word. And the world hates them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not. I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one." – John 17:14-15

The Israelites failed to fully wipe out the Canaanites from the land. Thus, the survivors of these nations were living amongst the Israelites. Joshua warns them in 23:12 to avoid marrying any of these survivors because they would be a snare and a trap, making it difficult for Israel to follow God.

As children of God who are in the world but not of the world, we face similar difficulty. The relationships that we form with people, both Christians and non-Christians alike, greatly impact our life. The more intimate the relationship, the more impact it will have which is why Joshua knew to warn the Israelites not to intermarry.

Because we live in this world as foreigners, we must exercise wisdom in the formation of our relationships. Consider your relationships. How are you currently being influenced by these relationships?



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March 31st

Judges 1:1-3:30. "The Next Generation"

I do not know a great deal about my ethnic heritage. In recent years my mother has become involved in much genealogical research which has provided limited knowledge. Now I know that my heritage is mainly European, but somewhere down the line the distinctiveness of that European heritage was lost. Now I don't think this was intentional, it simply wasn't handed down or taught to the next generation. The simple truth is that, if someone living as a foreigner doesn't teach their culture to the next generation, then it will be lost.

Remembering that we are living as aliens in this world, it is imperative that we teach our faith to the next generation. According to Judges 2:10, Israel failed to do so, in spite of the command Moses had given them in Deuteronomy 6:1-9.

So, what are you doing to ensure that our faith is not lost and the next generation is not absorbed into the rest of the culture? Tell your story; tell of what God has done for you. Don't leave it to someone else. Don't let the next generation forget what a mighty God we serve.

-David Curtis

April 1st

Judges 3:31-6:40. "Waiting for a Sign"

When Gideon received his calling from the Lord, three times he asked for a sign to reassure himself that God was truly with him. Three times! Why would Gideon put the Lord to this kind of test? Does he doubt God and his promises or does he doubt himself?

You know sometimes, I find it very easy to criticize Gideon, but I know that if you and I are honest, we are sometimes just like him. We doubt God's calling and purpose in our lives.

So, how can you know God's will for your life? First of all, read scripture, for God's word reveals His will; "Always be joyful. Keep on praying. No matter what happens, always be thankful, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus." (1 Thess. 5:16-18). Second is to trust God at His Word; "In all your ways acknowledge Him, and he will make your paths straight" (Prov.3:6 NIV).

Don't be like Gideon, wasting time looking and waiting for a sign. Rather, read God's word and live according to it, and then you can be confident that you are living according to His will and purpose for your life.

General Questions for each day:

Summarize the day's Bible passage in your own words.

What thoughts, actions, attitudes or beliefs are addressed in the passage?

How is the Holy Spirit leading you to apply this passage to your life today?

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Bible Discussion Guide:

With God's help Caleb conquered giants to receive God's blessing. What are some of the 'giants' that you need to conquer in your life?

What can you do to experience victory in defeating these giants?

How would you define contentment?

In what ways do you struggle with being content in God's provision?

How are God's blessings in this life the same as what we will receive in Heaven?

How are they different?

How would our outlook be different if we viewed God's provisions and blessings in this life the same way we view our future Heavenly rewards & blessings?

How can God be both a God of wrath, justice and holiness as well as a God of mercy, compassion and loving-kindness?

Why are the relationships we form with unsaved friends so important?

What type of relationships with unsaved persons should we avoid? Why?

What does it mean for you to be in the world but not of the world?

Why would Jesus pray that we remain in this world?

How can we be sure our faith is passed down to the next generation?

Personal application: What can you do to help pass on our faith?