

Free - Take One



Shaqah

*“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”
Colossians 2:8*

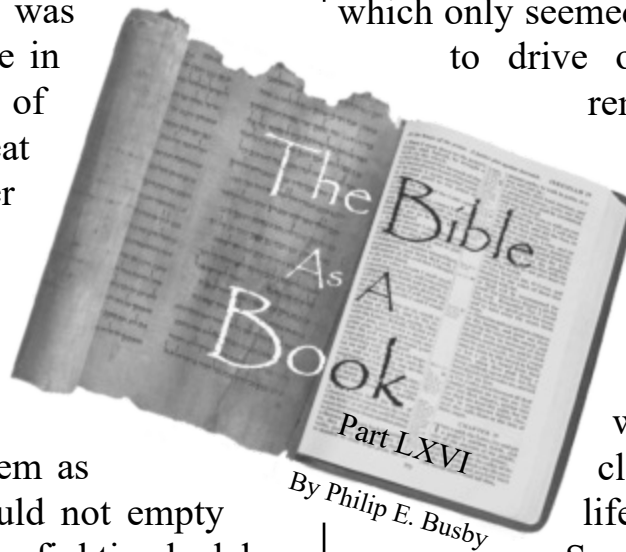
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As we continue our overview of the Book of Joshua, last time we talked about how Israel continued to take the promised land on the west side of Jordan. Exactly what land should be taken was becoming clear to Israel by the fact many kings were not waiting for Israel to come to them but coming out to attack Israel first. We looked at how this was particularly true of those in the North as the king of Hazor called a great number of kings to gather in a massive force against Israel. With God's help Israel would easily defeat these kings and their armies, even chasing them as they scattered. This would not empty the land in the North as the fighting had done in much of the South, but it would go a long way in clearing the way in the North as most of the kings had been destroyed. We also covered the fact the Anakims, who were the giants Israel was afraid of in the South, were driven out of the hills, but some of them escaped to survive among the Philistines; a fact we see plagued Israel in later history. These giants would not be the only

Canaanites to survive. As we got into the major topic of our last segment, which was the dividing of the land among the tribes, we see different tribes failing to complete the job of driving them out, instead making them servants through taxation. This was sad as it even caused the tribe of Ephraim to complain they hadn't been given enough which only seemed true because they failed to drive out the Canaanites that remained in their division.



Dividing the land was a major problem as Israel had now settled into the land, even setting up the tabernacle for the first time on this west side, and it became clear the end of Joshua's life was drawing near.

Several tribes had yet to receive portions of land as the work to scout out the North had not been done yet. Thus, Joshua would order men from the remaining tribes to go and do it, so before his death at least the borders could be drawn for their portions of land to be determined. All this brought us through Joshua chapter 18 verse 4, and we are ready to start our overview with verse 5 this time.

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As we begin our further look at how the land was divided among the tribes it's important we keep in mind much of the work of destroying and driving out the Canaanites had barely began in the North. This would greatly effect not just what land the remaining tribes received but how many Canaanites would be free to live in what was now Israel. Sadly, there were seven tribes left that had not been given portions of land, and that is an amazing thought considering there were only nine tribes who needed, at least, some land when Joshua began this process. I say at least because one of the tribes to receive a large portion of this land on the west of Jordan was the half tribe of Manasseh who already had land on the east side and who were not part of the nine still needing something. This means after the major portion of land Israel would ever hold for any time on this west side was divided, only two of the nine had been given land divisions. Those two were Judah and Ephraim.

If we consider the city of Jerusalem actually laid in a strip of land between Judah's and Ephraim's portion, a strip that was open from the Jordan river on the east and the coast on the west, one has to think it was possible God was originally leaving this open for future use of the temple service alone. There is an interesting description in Zechariah 14 of what Jerusalem will look like after Jesus returns and reestablishes the temple. In that description a very large portion of land is used to handle the fact we are told all the families of the earth will come up to Jerusalem yearly to hold the Feast of Tabernacles. That's a lot of people, but consider that every year at least all the males of Israel were to come up to Jerusalem

three times a year. We see in the time of Jesus walking among us as a man that coming for the Passover was done by more than just the males, and it's not odd to believe the commandment for the males to come up would set the tradition of whole families coming. Thus, it would make perfect sense that strip of land that lay between these two tribes was originally left open for the purpose of accommodating the influx of people. Sadly what we see in the end is that most of these remaining seven tribes didn't receive land portions of great size. We can believe this is due to their tribes being small, but it really has to do with not being willing to settle more of the land to the North than Israel ever did with permanency. In fact, that strip of land I was talking about actually becomes the land divisions of not one but two of these remaining tribes. This is a great example of how God has wonderful plans for us, but if man will not trust and follow God to accomplish those plans we will cut ourselves short of the blessings God wanted us to have!

What I just covered is further supported by the fact Joshua told these men from all seven remaining tribes to go scout the North so that it could specifically be divided into seven portions. He says that Judah would live in the South and Joseph's family would live to the north of that. However, the land to the north of Manasseh was to yield seven more portions for the seven remaining tribes. The end result was that only four tribes end up in the North. It's a technicality that Dan ends up with a small slice in the far North, and we'll get to how that happened. The point is these men would figure out how to divide that north

land and then come back to Joshua where they would cast lots on who got what portion of those divisions. We are told they scouted the land and divided it into seven portions which they even recorded in a book, but all seven of those portions were not to the north of Manasseh. Most gloss over this with the idea Israel had not really gotten a chance to scout all the land like they should. It's even suggested that Ephraim ending up complaining about getting too little showed the necessity of these twenty-one men going out to scout so no tribe would end up with too small as well as too large a division again. However, nothing about this makes much sense. Joshua specifies he had divided the land on the west side thus far giving the south to Judah and what was north of that to Ephraim and Manasseh. So how fair was it for only men from these seven tribes which had been accused by Joshua of being lazy to go determine the land for all the tribes?

The answer is, it was not fair nor was it the point. They were suppose to scout the North, but the divisions they came up with included land not part of the North in order to come up with seven new divisions. If that seems reasonable considering there was that slice of land between Judah and Ephraim, bear in mind two other facts. First, that slice of land was smaller than Ephraim's division, and yet it gets cut into two divisions. Second, one of their seven divisions wasn't even part of unclaimed land but a portion of the land already given to Judah! If that is not ridiculous enough, the idea the entire land was scouted to make sure a "mistake" like happened to Ephraim didn't continue to happen is thwarted by the fact the tribe of

Dan ends up with a small piece of land in the far North due to the very fact they were one of the two tribes given that land between Judah and Ephraim and it was not big enough for them. In a show of how much getting more land in the North was as simple as going up and taking it, that's exactly how Dan solves their problem of needing more land and the reason they had land in two different areas entirely. In the end, these twenty-one men did come back with seven divisions to cast lots for, but in doing so they showed Israel's further reluctance to believe God could give them this entire land God had promised Abraham. The end result was that the strip of land in the middle was filled by becoming two of the divisions, and a part of Judah's land was cut off to make another.

Because God allowed Israel to suffer their own laziness in this matter, nothing is said about any of this, which is what I believe leads people to think these twenty-one men were suppose to scout the entire land. I just find that a weak case, but each one can think as they please. The facts are Joshua simply goes off what these men came up with and begins casting lots to determine who got which portion. The first lot would be that of Benjamin, and they received the east part of that strip between Judah and Ephraim. This means Jerusalem would fall within Benjamin's land as they would end up with an eastern border that was the Jordan River and their western border would be set just under half way between the Jordan and the Mediterranean Coast. Their north border would, of course, be Ephraim's land, and their south would be defined by Judah's. We are even given a list of the major cities this included according to

what the twenty-one men had described. The second lot would be that of Simeon, and they would get a portion of land inside Judah's land. This is not well defined as we are only given some names of cities they were given. Extrapolating what appears to be the truth of what they received we can say Simeon's southern border was the border earlier described as being that of Judah's. The north border is by far not that easy, but Beersheba is listed and likely gives us the best mark to go by for setting their northern border. From there both Simeon's east and west borders are defined by what we were told was Judah's down in this far southern area. In later times we see Simeon's land was by far not well maintained as Beersheba is often referenced as being the furthest southern city of Israel. Yet another example of how Israel did not do what God wanted them to do and even lost what they once had gained.

One fact I'll point out here is that we are told Judah's land was too large for them, and it would seem the only other tribe coming close to getting that kind of land size would be Manasseh. However, this was part of the point. Each tribe really should have been given a portion bigger than they needed so they could expand into it. This dividing of the land was done so tribes would be clear of what was their responsibility to settle as they grew. The fact not all of it could be inhabited right away should not be surprising, but the twenty-one men were obviously not preparing for the future as much as attempting to make their job of scouting land as easy as possible. With that it should be said, there surely was input on this from Judah. They had been given this land and it's

hard to believe that with no consultation with them these twenty-one men simply chose to cut off a part of Judah in order to make one of their seven portions. To some, this is evidence the men were actually scouting the entire land, but again I ask, why three men from only these seven remaining tribes and not three men from each tribe if that was true? It is my belief it was well known Judah had a very large portion of land, and it was simply decided it would be no problem to create this portion that went to Simeon. If later times of Beersheba being the furthest southern city of Israel is any indication, it would seem neither Simeon or Judah maintained much of any of this portion.

The third lot was that of Zebulun, and their portion finally takes us to that north area which should have been bigger and contained all seven remaining divisions. This might be the hardest portion to describe in writing as Zebulun ends up with a spot of land almost dead center when looking at the Jordan River and Sea of Chinnereth on the east and the Mediterranean coast on the west. Of course, it is to the north of Manasseh, but to describe it further we can only say, it was about as wide from north to south as Ephraim's land and due to being almost round about that same size east to west. The fourth lot would be that of Issachar. They would receive a portion which loosely could be said to be the shape of a slice of pie. The east border is the easiest as it would be defined by the Jordan River and be about as tall north to south as Ephraim's land. This would mean its northern end would not quite reach the Sea of Chinnereth. From that point the north border would go out with a slight drop to the

Following the Biblical Stream:

By Philip E. Busby

In our last segment, we continued our look at the time God told Abraham to take his son Isaac to Mount Moriah and sacrifice him. In that part we talked about how Abraham had brought all that was needed to perform this act save the materials to make the altar itself. That caused us to go into a discussion about how much this mirrors the fact God The Father had given Jesus all that He needed as He came to this earth. Jesus would be created by the will of The Father alone; being given all the elements necessary to live as a human. In seeing how God stopped Abraham from killing Isaac, we talked about how important it is we all be able to hear the voice of God and know without doubt it is God Who is speaking to us. What Abraham was doing was not just obeying God but truly yielding to God in being willing to give something and do something that would seem against righteousness itself. Abraham also shows us his yielding in that he stopped at God's command, and God makes it clear Isaac was not to be harmed in anyway. This shows how much there was no reason for Isaac to be punished for any wrong he had done. All this was done to prophesy to us and confirm what we at this point have already seen, The Messiah would give Himself in spite of being completely pure. These discussions brought us to Genesis chapter 22 verse 12, and we will start in that verse this time.

Touching one more time on verse 12 let's not miss the fact God specifies that He knew Abraham feared Him because

Abraham was willing to give his son. We have talked a lot in this study about how this was an amazing event because Abraham wasn't just willing to give something that was most precious to him but he showed a willingness to follow God no matter what. All of that is wrapped up in the statement from God that Abraham had not withheld his only son from Him. One usually cares greatly for their own life. It's the motivation many have for choosing to be a Christian. At its simplest point there are those who believe heaven sounds better than hell. That's not a great motivation because getting to heaven is far more about a relationship with God than it is about any of the comfort aspects of heaven. However, in spite of the fact many would never say that's their true motivation for wanting to be saved, it's certainly a large part of it. I could take the point further but what I'm getting at here is the fact people care for their own existence. To preserve this life means everything to many people but to preserve our eternal existence is also there in our thoughts, whether large or small. All that said, there are many people who would give their life in order to save that of their child's. When we stop to think about that fact we have to understand, for a lot of people, a likely part of this is more than just a human instinct.

As humans we can do things that seem instinctive and even be taught that is true of many things. Of course, evolutionists love to tell us we are just another animal and our only claim to fame is the idea we are evolved

to a higher state. This would support the concept that we do, in fact, react on pure instinct a lot of times. While I'll admit it's true one of the three parts we are made of is flesh and just like the animals it has its instincts, the very things evolutionists are pointing to when they say we are more evolved actually has to do with the fact we are more than flesh. Humans have a mind and we use it to think things through. As we grow up part of the process of becoming an adult is the development of the mind in what we call, "reasoning." We often think of reasoning as sitting down and considering a situation, and certainly there are times for that. However, reasoning has a lot to do with making choices that in the end will drive what we look at as instinct in any given situation. This is why children can get into real trouble very easily. They have not had a lot of experience, and yes, just like an animal they have little instinct to handle those experiences. This is why good parents often allow their children to do things that could easily lead to real harm, but the parent allows it knowing they can swoop in should it go wrong. When the child succeeds they gain skills they can improve upon. If they fail and have to be rescued, they gain knowledge about where certain actions lead a person and/or where they failed. This allows the child to do better the next time they are faced with this or a similar situation. It can also teach them to avoid certain actions altogether.

That said, there is another thing we don't really think about, and that is the fact the child gains knowledge which allows them to extrapolate and explore in their mind scenarios that are different than the specific situation they just experienced. In time the brain becomes even more complex

and takes pieces from different experiences to extrapolate scenarios totally unlike any one specific situation we have ever been through. Even on a conscious level we are aware and even at times say things like, I wonder how I would react in this particular situation or another? We've all done it, and even if you think you never do think this way you actually have because that is what dreams are about in large part. Our brain puts together endless scenarios as we safely sleep away. We can often feel we really are/were in a particular place and/or time, even to the point waking up we are surprised, or glad as the case may be, that we were asleep and not doing the thing in the dream! I suppose about the best example of what I'm talking about is the dream where you are falling. Even if you have never fallen from any real height your brain can take any time you experienced a small fall and extrapolate what it would feel like to fall a great distance. In doing so, we wake up from such a dream with our heart pounding and trying to catch our breath, having felt we really were in jeopardy. It's crucial our body experience this heightened anxiety because the brain is running a "What if?" scenario. In any given situation it's not just how we think we would react while calm and collected but how we handle the way we are effected physically which can in turn affect our thinking. People can be trained and trained to do a dangerous job and then still find when they are actually needing that training they freeze or react quite differently than they thought they would. Just think how bad this might be if we did not dream.

Of course, dreaming about falling seems strange since there is nothing that can be done, but our sub-conscience mind does not easily accept the idea of the no win

scenario. It will continue to look for a solution, but another fact is that we do think about our own mortality. It is my belief our mind knows the only way to face death is when it happens. Thus, there is no way to truly extrapolate death, but that does not keep the mind from considering it. In truth, our mind covers a great number of topics, many which may not actually be possible to experience in reality. Only God really understands what we gain through all this process, but it's the mind at work nonetheless. When it comes to those things we can and/or likely will experience, dreaming with the right experiences to extrapolate from can help us build a premise for experiencing many things long before we are faced with them. Our mind prepares and tries to calculate what, if anything, could be done.

For example, we might be better prepared to face something we are nervous about because we've already ran the possibilities in our dreams, but in some cases we are still not prepared because we did not have the right experiences to extrapolate the right possibilities, emotions, outcomes, etc. That aside, the dreaming probably did help us handle what we were not fully prepared for by giving us a lot to draw from. While we don't remember it, it's likely even a dream we do "remember" has actually been ran in our mind multiple times. In each run through the brain might have tried different answers to a challenge or problem. This is why we sometimes wake up and find our dreams ridiculous. We think to ourselves, that would never happen! Maybe we're right maybe we're wrong, but in any case our brain often has no choice but

to fill in the gaps for things we don't have any firsthand knowledge to draw from. It will pull information to fill with from any number of ideas or experiences, and again, due to the number of times the brain ran the idea trying different things each time, the entire dream was likely far stranger to the conscience mind than just the one part we remember! The end result is that dreams help us grow through a combination of dreaming on the basis of what we do know and then facing actual experiences to show us the truth of what can or does happen in various situations.

Dreams can be silly or they can be downright terrifying and everything in-between. It's a subject far larger than we have room for in one segment, so let's get to the point – humans don't just react on instinct. This is true even from the angle that even animals learn from their experiences in some ways. However, animals will always find it hard not to apply a given reaction they developed due to a specific situation in all kinds of situations where something feels or seems the same. Humans grow to do, or should do, much better than that because our minds are capable of running extremely complex variables, and many of those things start in our childhood. The "instinct," or lack there of, to protect our child's life in spite of it meaning our own is certainly one of them. I'll admit it's far more obvious in women than in men, but in truth it's just harder to see in men. Little girls often have dolls they pretend are their offspring. As an adult this may seem silly at times but it's a large part of a child's development, especially in what kind of mother a girl will grow up to be. Men go about it differently in that their drive

is more of a protector than a nurturer. Boys far more often run the good guys versus bad guys scenario in their child's play. To many children, no matter their gender, being the hero in any given situation is special to them. No matter how it is literally played out, in doing this we each develop a lot of thoughts about how we will treat others. This is particularly true when it comes to how we feel about our children.

Abraham was, of course, guided by good upbringing. His father Terah showed a great concern for Abraham's well being and ability to accomplish what God asked of him by taking him away from Mesopotamia much earlier than Abraham might have been able to leave on his own. Terah also helped Abraham get established as an independent house with no need for concern over what he would inherit from Terah's house. From these facts and more we see there is little reason to doubt Abraham had good upbringing. On top of that, going out into the world gave Abraham a lot of life experience in order to form his thinking. Then there is the point we want to give the most credit to, which is the fact he had God's guidance. He trusted God through it all, not just to blindly lead him but teach him about life. All these things just add onto the fact we can feel assured Abraham had no thought in his head that it was a light thing to kill Isaac. Abraham had lived and seen pagans all around him following their rituals and customs. Many of these pagan religions asked for human sacrifice, and often that was to sacrifice the life of their child. These people were/are sold out to their gods, but this is often due to the fact when you serve a false god the real god you're serving is yourself! At the very least it comes down to mankind being a god of some sort, but the

idea of self preservation and/or that of your greater family, village, etc. is the primary motivation for these horrendous acts by pagans.

Abraham had no such issues. As talked about last time, he had to know it was possible he'd be punished with death for killing Isaac in spite of God telling him to do it. However, Abraham believed what Job believed. In Job's case we see a man who was told by his friends that he must have done something unrighteous against God to be suffering so badly, but Job told them he'd maintain his righteousness until the end. When talking about Abraham being killed for taking Isaac's life we see a man who knew if he died it would be for a clearly unrighteous action. Job shows us the attitude of a man who says even if God is responsible for my death I will trust in Him with no concern for how unjustified my suffering and death is. (Job 13:15) Job yielded his life to God in a situation many would accuse God of being unrighteous in by allowing, or as Job's friends believed, causing the suffering. Abraham was in the situation of being the one who would be guilty of the unrighteousness, yet he yielded to God when God was The One Who directly told him to take the action. In either case, some would accuse God of acting unrighteously.

In the end, we see Abraham was ordered not to take his son's life, and that settles the issue in that story. In the case with Job it's not that clean cut, and each of us have to choose how we feel on the issue. While most of us will accept God had a reason greater than Job himself for allowing Job to suffer so, it was still God who allowed it and to most of us that would be very personal, yet Job trusted God and was

What About God's Chosen People?

Part XL

From Living Springs' Questions and Answers

"Is it true that the Jews are God's chosen people? I have a Christian friend who says the Jews were not God's chosen people."

In our last segment, we continued our look at how the Bar Kokhba Revolt unfolded. We discussed the fact, once the Jews had control which Rome couldn't seem to win back in all-out battle, Rome stepped back to a strategy of slowly starving out the region. However, that turned out not to be good enough for Emperor Hadrian who eventually chose to call upon even more troops and a general named Sextus who had been fighting on the Northern frontier of the empire. Hadrian wanted to bring this to a quicker end because Rome had been given a black eye in all this and Hadrian did not want it to continue. With the reinforcements almost doubling the size of Rome's army in Judea, and a new general in charge of it all, Rome went back on the offensive in a big way! Sextus took down Jewish stronghold after stronghold. In just one short year Herodium had been recaptured and Bar Kokhba's second in command killed during that event. Eventually, Rome had Bar Kokhba himself and most of his remaining army under siege in the fortress of Betar southwest of Jerusalem. When Rome finally did break through, history tells us they simply started killing everyone without concern for who was a fighter and who was a civilian. Even prior to taking Betar Rome had begun to kill in much this way, but after Betar fell Rome turned this war into a campaign of annihilation. This was the true beginning of

the end, not for the Jewish nation as a whole, but for their ability to remain in large numbers in any part of the land of Israel.

Israel's numbers on the land would not only be diminished by the direct killing of Jews, but Rome would work to destroy the Jewish leadership. Rome would execute eight leading members of the Sanhedrin, and the descriptions of their deaths is not one of a simple execution but of agonizing torture. Like so many people before them, the Romans were not above the barbaric tactics of removing people's skin while still alive. One Rabbi was used as a specific mockery of Jewish ways as he was burned at the stake. To make the experience last longer he was wrapped in wet wool which was held around him using a Torah scroll. In doing things like this the Romans truly showed they despised God's Law. They believed God's Law is what made the Jews the kind of people who would continue to rebel against them and their Hellenistic ideas. While this is true in that God's Law is what made the Jews feel they had to have their freedom, even from a secular power that originally allowed them to carry out their customs, there were other people who at various times attempted to break free from imperial powers. As we specifically study Jewish history one must be careful never to think the rest of the world, or even just the empire, was living in peace while the Jews couldn't stop causing trouble. Keeping control over territory is pretty much a full-time job for any empire. Beyond that, just because some people don't take up arms

doesn't mean they are grateful to be under imperial control. I bring this up because the Jews being restless and attempting to break free from the empire might have left them with a history of being a "rebellious people," but they were/are not the only ones who wanted to be free.

In the end the truth still comes down to the point many people, especially those who crave power, hate the ways of God. I often talk about how God made sure all humanity does not easily meld nor can be forced into one culture and/or way of life by confounding man's language, and this makes it true one can choose to blame God for a lot of the war throughout history. The fact this is an undeniable truth is a main reason why the Christian religion does not want to teach it that way. Instead they like to change the story to make it about God being unhappy man did not spread out into their various territories and/or have dominion over the entire world as He told Adam and Eve man was to have. (Gen. 1:28) I've come to realize that while many individual Christians believe wrong teaching when it comes to the Tower of Babel, that is due to the fact they simply have been taught the "Christian doctrine" and go no further. However, the people who wrote that doctrine were highly motivated to look at these stories in the way they did because they wanted God to seem more, shall we say, "appealing." It's not a very appealing thought to have a God Who is suppose to be loving and have to teach He is responsible for most of the war in the world. That seems like not just a hard hole to dig one's self out of while trying to teach people but also a downright contradiction.

We just can not bring ourselves to believe and/or understand how true it is that

without taking away our free will God must do many things for our good which we will in no way see as for our good. This even goes beyond the illustration of a parent having to show a child what in our modern times is often referred to as "tough love." I talk about it and will continue to talk about it because it's so key and yet something the religion of Christianity does not wish to teach; God has caused the basis for a lot of misery in this world for man. It was God Who cursed the ground at the time of the fall. (Gen. 3:17-19) The effect of this was not just that it made life hard for farmers, it ultimately causes us all to have to work and toil in this life. It was God Who sent a worldwide flood and killed every last human on this planet save the eight people willing to get on the ark God had instructed Noah to build. (Gen. 6) This flood also did massive damage to the planet, which would make the curse of the ground an even bigger problem as there would be less good ground for a shorter period of time than if the planet had simply waxed old on its own. It was also God Who confounded our language at the Tower of Babel and kept people who were cooperating from building a centralized government and religion that was maintaining relative peace in the world. (Gen. 11:1-9) All this and more was done by God.

The fact it sounds so bad to put it all that way is why there is even a theology which states The God of the Old Testament was an angry God Who would strike men down when something made Him angry, and then The God of the New Testament was/is actually a different God Who came in love to bring peace. If we take what most who call themselves Christians believe, this is only the inevitable conclusion of the doctrine. The only other thing to believe is that instead of a

different God we are, at the very least, talking about a God Who chose to change how He dealt with man; a God Who went from being extremely firm handed to far more passive. Now, I can just see many who are reading this shaking their heads thinking, "I don't believe anything of the kind!" However, if you do or if you do not believe you have any of this in your theology is not as relevant as the point I'm trying to make which is, we all need to watch for it! It's important as we study the Bible we take what is said at face value. It does not have to be watered down or reinterpreted in order to understand. Just as I put it, God is responsible for much of the misery among men. Be careful not to attempt to sidestep this both in your personal beliefs as well as when you share God with others. I know firsthand that is not appealing because especially as Christians we want to emphasize God is a God of love and anything that would make Him seem otherwise we would like to avoid. However, therein lies the foundation for so much false teaching in the church.

As we look at these events that took place in God's chosen nation it's hard to believe these were God's people and yet He allowed all these terrible things to happen to them. Many of the Jews involved with this revolt, as well as other wars, did so believing God would intervene to save the nation. What the Jews show us is actually an attitude of believing they could make much of these choices for themselves and God would have no choice but to help them because they were His people. Thus, for so many reasons and in so many ways we are brought to the question, how could God allow this to happen? The answer the church came up with was/is that

the chosen nation was replaced by the church itself. That Jews were/are a rejected people, and this is mostly due to the fact they killed The Messiah! See what I mean? If we take the idea of what love is from our own thoughts that seems to make perfect sense. The destruction the nation suffered post Jesus first coming only seems to confirm the thought. However, if we believe God is love and seek, not to explain away everything we see in the Bible which does not at face value seem to support that, we find ourselves on a path of learning what real love is. Real love, as it comes from God, is so far beyond what we call tough love in parenting it's hard to wrap one's head around. So can we really grasp it? At the moment the answer to that is likely no, but in time we can learn and grow to grasp it more and more; to understand it deeper and deeper.

This is the walk in faith I talk about so much! It is not a blind belief, but faith can at times seem to be that due to the fact we as children have such a hard time understanding much of anything about where God is going with all this and why. We are still the children who lay on the grassy knoll looking up at the seemingly endless sky asking, why am I here? In that way, a walk with God feels like blind belief. It's what leads people to take on the attitude which states we should just live our lives without concern for more than a tip of the iceberg understanding of what is right and wrong, because as long as we don't step across those "big lines" of unrighteousness the rest is just in God's hands. I mean why not? God and God alone can forgive our sins so what does it matter how many of the little things we do? As long as we generally try to be "good people" there

is no reason God shouldn't accept us in the end. These are all the wrong ways of looking at it. Faith must be understood as a walk, a relationship with God, and not blind belief because only that shows us we are not fumbling along just trusting God will make it all right in the end. Instead, we see how much we have a way to learn so we are not so blind as we once were! Communing with God is the path of growth in understanding not just accepting. We don't have to blindly accept it's alright that God did things that seemed unkind because He's God. We can grasp the why it was the better thing! Yes, this takes trust because we must trust God knows what he's doing, but faith is also not just trust. The better way to see it is to understand trust leads us to faith. If we trust God we believe there are things to learn. If we believe there are things to learn we understand it's our responsibility to seek to learn those things and not be so ignorant. Since what there is to learn is so overwhelmingly huge, we must also accept the road ahead stretches far further than we can see or imagine!

Growing up I often heard various people say things like, I wonder about this or that. When I get to heaven I'm going to ask God why He did this or why certain things were the way they were. As a child I had some of those thoughts myself, but some of the things I wanted to ask I came to realize I understood much better as an adult just due to more years of experience. This is telling in and of itself if you think about it. Most understand it simply means I grew up. Did I still have questions? Of course I did, but as a minister, I more and more had people mention things they wanted to ask God. They'd ask me if I thought God would answer or did I know the answer? Some would even get close to the real answer by saying maybe

we won't care about that once we're in heaven. To these things my response was the fact once we get to heaven our perspective on, not just this life, but existence itself will be so different I doubt many of the questions we would like to ask now will seem relevant anymore. This is what most of those who said "Maybe we won't care." were getting at to a degree. However, that was/is often said with the thought we will be so comfortable in heaven we'll just let it all go. What I meant when I gave my response was more about the fact that once we no longer have sickness, the concern of death, labor, pain, or any of those negative things, we will have such a different perspective it won't be an "Oh who cares anymore?" thought, but a greater understanding and view of the bigger picture that makes most of our questions irrelevant.

As I continued to grow by the grace God has given me and understand more of the knowledge God can give, I have turned more and more from even that answer. It's not just that in the bigger perspective we will have on the other side things we want to ask will seem too small to care about. It's not just that we will gain so much in the transition we will see most of it as irrelevant. No, there is a greater truth I see by looking back at the process of growth and all we have been talking about here. That truth, while greater, is actually so very basic. We are here, right now, and should be walking in a relationship with God (faith). This fact simply means, if we have things we want to ask God, we should not be waiting to get to heaven, we should ask now! To some that might sound too simplistic, but it's not. That is the foundational truth of faith. God gave us life so He could commune with us. What else is communing but learning about each other, considering questions and sharing

experiences? Yes, heaven will be very different and mostly because all the negative things that so easily inhibit us here will be gone, but the point of faith is not waiting to talk to God about anything. Faith is the substance of where we are going, the continual evidence what we have not yet seen is possible. (Heb. 11:1) We believe God will give us all the good things written in His Word about heaven. We believe where we are headed ultimately is phenomenal compared to what we have now, but that said, faith is still the substance. That means while so much will change for the better the base premise we now live in will not!

When we look at those stories that point to God being the base cause of misery among men we should not attempt to explain them away by saying anything changed about God and His ways on this side of sending Jesus. We shouldn't feel the need to find an explanation in our own minds that quantifies what seems like a contradiction. We should seek God, ask God, knock on the door and expect an answer. This is what Jesus Himself told us to do! (Luke 11:9-10) The expectation is important because so often we will find God does not answer our questions directly. This fact is why so many have questions they want to ask when they get to heaven. We feel, once there, we can walk up face to face, so to speak, ask a point-blank question and get a direct answer. That is the difference right? Wrong! The need to grow is the reason God does not often seem to give a direct answer to our questions. It's not His unwillingness to give us a direct answer, it's the fact we have so much to learn in order to understand the direct answer. In our current state of learning, the direct answer would do us no good. This is what I was getting at when I told people our prospective would be bigger in heaven. We

will understand so much more, the answers to some of the questions will be obvious. Still other things will not be because heaven is not the automatic ticket to the ultimate end of what we have to learn. Instead, it will be the opportunity to continue learning, with the added bonus of getting back what was lost in the Garden of Eden. Our "comfort" will be a byproduct of it all. The ability to be who we were created to be, to learn and to grow, that is the real point.

This is why I so often say Satan did not lie to Eve when he said God didn't want us to eat the fruit because we would become like God once we did. I often stress the point we can't handle the responsibility, and that is very true. It's why man got in so much trouble for taking the fruit and why it is really not God Who causes the misery but us. We did not do the right thing in spite of being responsible for only one simple commandment from God, and we certainly do not do the right things the full knowledge of good and evil demands from us. This is what causes God to do things even He does not want to do, like, curse the ground; send a world wide flood; and confound our language. (Gen. 8:20-22) However, this in and of itself shows us why God must do another thing He does not want to do. God will not allow this universe to continue forever. He must one day separate those who want what He created us for from those who do not want it. This so those who do want it can move on and those who do not can be destroyed. God doesn't want anyone to perish, but by doing this the misery will end and God will never again have to "cause" any more! (II Pet. 3:9)

What Adam and Eve showed us is that we as humans want the knowledge, and the

ability to get it all on our own is why God put the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil within reach to begin with. The truth is the fact we have this desire is a good thing! On the surface that might sound shocking but it's very true. For instance, fire is a great tool, a powerful source of energy which we use to drive our lives. So too is the knowledge of good and evil, but like a child learning to handle fire, God wants us to learn how to handle the knowledge and be responsible for it before we just run around with it. That said, unlike fire we are talking about something that is far more than a simple tool or energy source. The knowledge is what drives existence itself. These are small words to describe something far beyond our current comprehension, but that in no way means it's not something we can't seek after. The questions we have now are as much for now as they are for when we get to heaven. The lack of a direct answer from God is His love. Understand, God does not refuse to answer our questions, we just don't often see He's already at work answering. The growth we need to understand the questions we want answers to is the definition of life. In other words, faith is the answer!

In so many ways and on so many levels God has or is in the process of answering our questions by using the chosen nation. It is an understatement to say the bulk of the Bible is the history of where they came from and the history they've been through. In reading about their experiences we do not just see simple moral tales and/or the examples of men walking in great faith. From the micro to the macro their history and events teach us so much it cannot be overstated. That is why a study like this one is so important. God's

chosen nation was not rejected by God, they have continued to be used throughout the centuries. They are showing us what is ahead. When Jesus told us we know things about the weather by looking at the sky and the seasons, etc., this is what He was talking about. (Matt. 16:1-4, 24:32-33) If we pay attention we learn to recognize things we are otherwise oblivious to. Reading and studying about the chosen nation gives us a great view of ourselves. By doing so we gain knowledge it would otherwise take years to gain, and we need to understand the Bible does not chronologically end where it does because that was the end of what there was to gain from the nation. If one thinks about it, the Bible actually ends long before the time of what we call the New Testament.

The Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) chronologically ends around 400 B.C. If you know how the calendar we use was intended to work you know the point was to put the year of Jesus' birth as the anchor and count up going either way from that year. While today we don't believe Jesus was born in 1 A.D. it was still very close at around 5 B.C. This means there was some 400 years between where the Hebrew Bible ends and the New Testament begins, yet in this study we see how much information we have about even those 400 years which is not covered by the Bible. The New Testament as a whole only covers 100 years at best and even that is mostly because what little writing there is was written over the span of the lifetime of the apostles, and a few others. Outside the Gospels and Acts its historic value is minimal. This means the point of the New Testament was to show us how Jesus fulfilled prophecy given in the Hebrew Bible and not

really about recording history so much. Thus, from where the Hebrew Bible ends to where we are now is 2300 to 2400 years of the Bible not covering history, even that of the chosen nation, like the bulk of the Hebrew Bible does. From that perspective, we see how much the point should have been made to us long, long ago that studying the chosen nation and the events it has/is going through is important; something to pay attention to and learn from.

For close to two and a half millennia now that history comes from the records of men and not something we would call Scripture, but what has changed? Do you really believe God stopped speaking to the leaders, prophets, etc. of Israel and that's why the Hebrew Bible ends? To believe such a thing would be foolish considering Jesus came some 400 years later. Thus, it's equally foolish to believe Israel was rejected or replaced at the time of Christ. In seeing what a gap there is from the Hebrew Bible's end to The Messiah, we should understand the only real reason for us to have the New Testament at all is because God would not leave that event to the records of men. We needed the fine details of that event like we get so much of in the Hebrew Bible. This is given to us in the Gospels, and in saying all that I submit to you the thought that just as I emphasize the Torah is the real core of the Bible and contains far more of the most vital information we need than all the books that follow, so too the gospels are the core of the New Testament and also contain far more value than the books that follow. The very structure of the Word of God shows us there is core information needed for anything that follows to have meaning. Therefore, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Matthew, Mark, Luke (which

actually is one book with Acts) and John are the vital Scriptures.

The first five show us how we got on the path we're walking in the first place; the why Christ would come at all. The Gospels show us God's ultimate answer for fixing this mess we have made of our existence. Everything in between and after these books is there simply to show how man reacts to God's actions and where that is taking us. Just as the Hebrew Bible gives prophecy so the nation and the world could recognize and be prepared to receive The Messiah when He came, the New Testament gives us prophecy so we can recognize and be prepared to receive Him when He returns. We have all the information we need to have no excuses. The more we study and learn the further historical events that happened between the chronological close of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament the better we see where the nation was when Jesus came and maybe more importantly why they reacted the way they did to Jesus. The more we study the events of the nation following Jesus' first coming the more clearly we can see what the prophecy was/is telling us about where we will be and how we will react to Jesus' Second Coming. Be not deceived, what a man sows that he will reap. (Gal. 6:7) If the field that is our life is sown with false doctrine we will not be prepared to receive The Lord when He comes. Instead we will reject Him, but those who have sown their field with the good seed of studying, not just what the Bible has to say but also what It leads us to see as important information to study outside of It, we'll be prepared at His coming.

That is why we are doing this study. It's not just to disprove the argument some

have that the Jews are not God's chosen people or even nation, at least not at this point, it's to help us all do the work of learning information many who call themselves Christians never learn and rarely study. As a young man who had already been in the ministry for some years before I got out of high school, I was shocked to find how little those who go to Bible college are taught any of this information. How little focus, if not totally devoid, of Biblical language study and history a four year Bible degree contains! After years of teaching the Word of God I look back on it and am more astonished than I was then, and for me it all stands as a grand example of how false teaching has devastated what we call Christianity. It is the point we have spent most of our time talking about in this segment. We just don't have a perspective on what is important much less a knowledge of it. We have been led astray by false doctrine, and because of it we feed mostly on useless information that is not relevant to true faith. We have become so full of this counterproductive fodder, we have a need to be purged of it. As a teacher I sadly find myself spending far more time attempting to help individuals do that, I often feel I get little chance to just teach what is nourishing. This is the state we as Christians have fallen to, and it is in no way unlike the state Israel was in at the time Jesus came. In looking at what befell the chosen nation throughout their history we can all be warned of where we are headed.

Now, one of the oddest facts of the ending to this revolt is that it's not known for sure what exactly happened to Bar Kokhba himself. Some records indicate he may have died of something as simple as a snake bite while under siege at Betar. It's also suggested

he was executed by the Sanhedrin as a false messiah, but that one seems unlikely because by the time things were obviously going to end so badly the Sanhedrin probably had little access to him. In any case, one main account records that the head of Bar Kokhba was presented to Emperor Hadrian. This is very likely as such an action was not uncommon, and one has to believe this would have pleased Hadrian very much. It is believed by some that as the devastation took place following the fall of Betar, small groups of remaining rebels attempted to continue the resistance, but what is clear is that by early 136 A.D. it was all over and Rome had won. The Jewish leadership was gutted, some 50 fortified towns and 985 villages were razed to the ground, 580,000 Jews were slaughtered, many more would die of famine and disease. The fate of the chosen nation was in doubt like it never had been before. Thus, it should go without saying that studying these facts about how the Bar Kokhba Revolt ended is disturbing to look at, and it's disturbing to think God allowed such a devastation of His nation. However, God did so to allow us all to see where we are headed if we turn from His guidance. He will never leave us nor forsake us, but if we forsake Him we stand at the mercies of this world and all the hate for the things of God it contains. (Heb. 13:5-6) Anyone can walk in blindness, but if we are to walk in true faith we must turn from the lies that are comfortable and begin seeking the truth for ourselves!

Until next time, may we each continually choose to be the people God wants us to be!

***Questions submitted to the Institute,
answered by Philip E. Busby.***

FBS continued from pg. 8

willing! This is the kind of yielding God needs from people who serve Him in order to further the Kingdom of God for everyone. It is a matter of certain people making sacrifices for the sake of all of us learning what God wants us to learn and seeing what He wants us to see. Abraham had surely considered what he might do or how he might respond should God ask such a thing of him, and while God knew Abraham would do it, Abraham now knew it was true. He held back nothing from God, and in a way that went beyond saying he'd even give his own life. Abraham said whatever is in my life is subject to God's service and His use. As we covered, Isaac was old enough he had to have been willing or Abraham would never have gotten Isaac on that altar, but the point stands. Abraham would withhold nothing in his life from God!

As we move into verse 13 we see that part of the story those familiar with it point to as God's provision as Abraham looks up and sees a ram caught in the thicket. Of course, this means the animal was easy to get, but for a minute let's put aside the fact God provided this ram and focus on Abraham's attitude. Abraham looked around and saw this animal he could use for a sacrifice, but stop to consider the fact Abraham had not been ordered to sacrifice something on this hill other than his son. There are no words here which tell us God told Abraham or even indicated he needed to take the ram instead. This means once God had halted Abraham from sacrificing Isaac Abraham's obligation to do anything more was gone. I think people often get into their, dare I call it, Bible mode when reading these stories and see Abraham sacrificing this ram as the obvious outcome of it being

there. I mean why not, he came to sacrifice to God right? However, we should stop to consider how you might feel. Many of us can pull ourselves together and do something we find very hard or that is very stressful. If it's something we really dreaded doing we are usually glad when it's over and there can be great relief if it gets called off, but depending on the circumstances we can also feel very negative emotions about dreading it all this time. These negative emotions can equal how bad we would have felt to go through with it.

When we look at this situation with Abraham, we may not be looking at that drastic a situation emotionally, but think about it. Abraham was no doubt relieved he did not have to kill his son, but to do something this serious one has to take on the right mindset. That mindset is usually very somber because it is so focused on building a determination to do the thing, and that is often very stressful to go through. When it's suddenly over, we can find ourselves frustrated. We may not be upset at who caused the stress, but there is a lot of negativity which is not anger but still negative. When people get under great stress they can get into fights, especially with someone they like or love. They may pull it together and understand the fight was just about the stress and not the "thing" that was the subject of the fight, but the experience will often leave one with the feeling you just don't want to be around the other person for awhile. We say things like, "I just need some time to myself to process this." or "I understand why this happened but I can't be with you right now." If we see the purely human side of this we should see how Abraham could be very relieved but at the same time not happy. After being halted

by God, Abraham had the ability to let his mind release the tension of determination it took to get this far. This situation Abraham goes through is easy to read and rejoice over, but Abraham was living through it. He could easily have had the attitude by this moment that he was in no mood to worship.

I say that with the full understanding there are many people who would disagree and/or feel he had more reason to worship God now than he had leading up to that moment. Like Noah coming off the ark and being free from that wooden prison he and his family had lived in for over a year, along with all those animals, Noah had reason to rejoice. For some, this would totally be true, and maybe it was for Abraham but consider if it was not. God did not tell Abraham to sacrifice this ram, yet there it was, the epitome of what Abraham had told Isaac about when saying God would provide a lamb. Abraham was literally standing beside an altar he had built in order to sacrifice to God and worship God. He held the knife in his hand which no doubt was a special knife reserved for the purpose of sacrifice. This was no impromptu moment that required Abraham to have a reason to want to worship God, and due to that he dropped everything to gather these things and worship. This was not an order from God, but how could one refuse? This idea alone could build even more negative emotion into the situation, but from what we are told in verse 13 Abraham did not refuse. I hope we can all see what I'm getting at here. One might say, of course this is what a great man like Abraham would do due to how he would feel, but these stories aren't just about that, they are also about taking the time to

consider how we would feel if we were in that situation. Just accepting a man like Abraham did it is not enough, and we should be very careful before we believe we could easily do the same!

Of course, Abraham took that ram and offered it as a burnt offering, but we are specifically told he did it in place of Isaac. Abraham had come here to sacrifice to God. He intended to sacrifice what God had told him to sacrifice and that was Isaac. However, God stopped Abraham. This is why I emphasize God never told Abraham to use the ram yet we are told he did so - in Isaac's place. Again, we can take this as something light if we want or obvious, but God had made it clear Abraham was not to harm Isaac, which told us Isaac had done nothing worthy of punishment. If nothing worthy of punishment then there was no reason to sacrifice for Isaac's sake. Abraham himself had done nothing worthy of punishment; he had just passed about the greatest test anyone could be given by God! I drive this into the ground because to offer in place of Isaac would seem to indicate he was sacrificing for Isaac's benefit or his own and not just as worship. Since all three of these reasons don't seem to apply, why are we told Abraham did this in place of Isaac whom God told him he did not need to offer? The answer to that is found in looking at the words correctly.

I just keep going back, and back, and back so much to what Abraham told Isaac when Isaac asked about the sacrifice. It would be God Who would one day sacrifice Himself for our salvation from our sin. This Abraham knew because he had a

relationship with God (faith). For all the symbolism related to that which we could look at concerning how God provided this ram for Abraham to sacrifice, we are told Abraham does it because he was asked to sacrifice Isaac. God ultimately didn't let him do that so Abraham sacrifices this ram in Isaac's place. What this really shows us is how deeply Abraham understood what he told Isaac in maybe more details than we will ever know. It's as if Abraham knew some fine details we only know on this side of Jesus' coming. God was not going to simply send The Messiah one day, but The Messiah would be God Himself. While this is in Abraham's answer to Isaac, that fact is something to this day the doctrine of Judaism rejects. It says The Messiah will not be God. Even at the time of Jesus, that is what He was killed for. Jesus thought it not robbery to be equal to God. (John 5:18, Phil. 2:5-8) God sent His son to die for us and whether you take that as being a form of God sacrificing Himself because Jesus was God's Son or understand the nature of God deep enough to know Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are just ways for us to grasp God's composition, doesn't matter. What we now know, and teach as believers in Jesus, is that He was The Son of God and He gave His life for us all!

No matter how deeply Abraham understood this is how it would one day transpire, Abraham knew by doing this he was representing in a deep way the very thing God would one day do for us. When the words tell us Abraham sacrificed this ram, "...in the stead of his son." it is telling us Abraham wanted to be like God. No, he didn't want to be God nor did he think he was on his way to becoming a god. What Abraham wanted was to be like his Father in

heaven. As a child will often imitate their parent so too Abraham would, dare I say it, pretend to do what he knew only his Heavenly Father could do in truth. In full representation of his willingness to give his only son, Abraham slits the throat of this ram and burns him on the very altar that was meant for Isaac. He does this in full thankfulness to God for what God would one day do. Abraham says to God, You will one day give Your all for us, and even though you ultimately did not ask me to give my son, I give him anyway!

Now, verse 14 is where we get into a controversy as far as I am concerned. Far be it from me to declare myself some master of the languages this English translation comes to us through. However, what I have become convinced of more and more as the years go by is how much God led the translation of His Word into the English version we know as the King James. You can like it or not, but in my opinion when others have done an English translation, both before and after the King James, they go a lot more off their own thoughts and doctrine than they do the literal words that were written. The King James can be hard to understand at times, but as I talk about so often this is because what it's trying to convey is deep and hard to translate into such a weak limited language such as English. That said, English has been for a good deal of time now a primary, if not the primary, language the Bible is studied in by those who have been responsible for the sharing of the Gospel in a large part of the world. It only stands to reason God would lead this translation process of the version He would assure became and remained a primary source of the text for so long. Thus, what I believe is that while the King James cannot fully convey the text due to the use of

English alone, it does an incredible job at showing us the meaning if we will just look at what it actually says without being clouded by the doctrines of men which have corrupted so many other translations.

The controversy in my mind is that verse 14 tells us Abraham calls this place, "Jehovah-jireh." Now, it's pretty widely known that Jehovah is a common way of referring to God. Some even believe the use of the "J" sound instead of the "Y" sound in this name is a fallacy, but that's not a point that effects our issue here. The "jireh" part of the name is where the issue comes in. What the King James tells us is that this name was used by Abraham because "...In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen." This causes some to say, another way to put it is to say, "The Lord sees." Due to the idea doctrine wants to continue that part contained in Abraham's statement about God providing, it is given the meaning, "God provides" or "God our Provider." This they say is right there in that God provided the ram for Abraham and it is after that Abraham names this place. The excuse is that the proper way to put it is to say, "God will see to it." In other words, make sure it happens and this is then said to be the same as God will provide to make it possible. The fact this idea existed, even before the words were ever translated into English makes some proclaim their translation is more proper, like the New International Version which translates Abraham as saying, "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided."

The truth is, the provide aspect of the name is only one aspect of it. Thanks be to

God the King James does not go off the doctrine of men to translate its words but attempts to literally translate them as directly as it can. This gives us the opportunity to see Abraham actually used a word to name the place and had a reason why. That reason was not that God would provide so much as it was that God sees. One can easily take the leap by saying God sees a need and provides for it, but if you don't insist on getting to that meaning there's no reason to leap. What Abraham was saying was not some platitude but a truth about the fact God would prove Himself to be the loving God which in some ways this story might indicate He wasn't. Abraham was saying, due to suffering in the here and now, much of this world does not believe the plan of God is true. They didn't/don't believe God will/has provided Himself as a lamb or that He necessarily can overcome death so easily. Further, the attitude man showed at the Tower of Babel was the idea we don't need God. It's the idea we can do it on our own, using our own religion and thoughts. We can save ourselves because we can or have grown, not to follow God's example for how to live, but to be gods ourselves. This is man's arrogant attitude, but for those who want to emulate God, God will/has shown, in His Holy Mount, the plan of salvation He has for them. As for those who doubt God can or will do what's necessary or what He said He'd do, they have been and will be proven wrong!

Until next time, Shalom!

south until where it hit Zebulun's east border, and then turn sharper south to meet the southern border which came about as straight as any border line does from where it starts at the Jordan River to where it meets the northern border. This means Issachar's west border was just this tip at the end roughly half way between the Jordan River and Mediterranean coast.

The fifth lot was that of Asher. They would receive coastal land, and so their west border would be the Mediterranean coastline beginning from just south of the city of Dor and stretching to a more familiar coastal city named Zidon. By New Testament time this city was known as Sidon. They would have no real north border as the east border would also begin at Zidon and cut south and a little east until it reached that half way line between the Jordan River and Mediterranean coast. It would then run pretty much parallel to the coast until it came to the top of Zebulun's land where it would be defined by that tribe's land until it got past it on the south end. It would continue the southwest angle this caused until it had made it about half way back out to the coast, and from there we get the southern border which is a line with a couple of dips in it as it heads out to the coastline. The sixth lot would be that of Naphtali, and they would get the land directly east of Asher. This would make their west border that of Asher's east, but only in the portion where Asher's border got to that half way point between the river and the coast. Naphtali's west border would go south from there until it hit the top of Zebulun's land and then follow their border as it dropped south to meet Issachar's land.

Naphtali's south border would then be defined by the north border of Issachar. The east border would run up the Jordan river and along the west shores of the Sea of Chinnereth, then the Jordan again and around the west shores of the Lake of Huleh, and then the river again until it got as far north as Leshem, which is the city the tribe of Dan would later come to take. From there Naphtali's north border would be a very straight line west to meet Asher's border once again.

In truth, this land to the further north was available, but the twenty-one did not scout it, it would seem, or they did not include it in the divisions in any case. This is shown in that the seventh lot was that of Dan, and they would find their portion too small so they would come up and take Leshem to have more room. This city would then be renamed as Dan to honor this tribe's father's name. While Zidon is further north than this by quite a ways and was part of Asher's portion, we see in later times Dan became known as the furthest northern city in Israel just as Beersheba became known as the furthest southern one. Thus, the saying, "From Dan to Beersheba." was a way to describe the land of Israel. Now the bulk of land given to Dan is easy to define at this point as it was the remainder of that strip of land between Judah and Ephraim. This made Dan's west border the Mediterranean coast and their south border Judah's north until it reached about half way between the Jordan River and the coast. Dan's east border was defined by Benjamin and their northern border would be Ephraim's southern border, again going all the way out to the coast.

We are told these were the divisions that were given to each tribe as Joshua, Eleazar the priest, and the heads of the tribes cast lots before the tabernacle at Shiloh. Then we are told Joshua was given a city for his own family. This was a city he chose, and it was very centrally located. Joshua chose the city of Timnath-serah, which is located in the land of Ephraim almost dead middle between the Jordan river and the Mediterranean coast. We are told Joshua built this city to his liking and there he would live the remainder of his life. This would put Joshua far enough away from Shiloh to make it clear he was not establishing a capital city where he and the tabernacle were, but not so far from Shiloh that he was still very accessible should the priests, leaders, or the people in general wish to reach him. In finishing the fine details needed for the nation to live across a large land and not as an encampment of people just around the tabernacle, The Lord tells Joshua it was time to choose the cities of refuge. This was a provision in the Law as it was given to Moses, and it was one that could not be set up, nor was it needed to be in service while the nation was being led on their journey to the promised land as one large group. (Num. 35:9-34) However, now it was very necessary these be available so anyone who felt they had killed a person unintentionally could run to one in order to be protected from the family, friends, etc. who would otherwise take their life as punishment for murder. This the person could do so they could get a fair trial to determine if the death was unintentional. Even if the death was just as such, whichever one of these cities someone ran to would become the place they would live until the

death of the current High Priest. If they outlived the High Priest they then could return to their original home, and anyone who took revenge upon them after that would be guilty of murder just as they would be by killing them in the city of refuge or for any reason killing someone would be considered murder.

The first of these cities of refuge would be Kedesh, which was very far north in the land of Naphtali. The second would be more centrally located as it would be Shechem, which is part of the Mount of Ephraim but technically in the division belonging to Manasseh. The third city would be in the south as it was that very familiar city of Hebron. This was in Judah's division and was the main city sighted as being given to Caleb for a possession. (Josh. 15:13) However, this shows us how much making a city a city of refuge did not change its ownership or take it away from the tribe it belonged to in any way. It simply meant it was a city to be used for that purpose. Now, Moses had already named the next three. (Deut. 4:41-43) Thus, the fourth city was Bezer, and this was a city on the east side of the Jordan. It is believed it actually lay almost straight east out from the top of the Dead Sea, and this put Bezer in the division belonging to Reuben. The fifth city would be Ramoth which, again, is a more centrally located city when speaking north to south. This city was also on the east side of Jordan and some say it was one and the same as Ramothgilead, but here we are told it was in the division belonging to Gad. The sixth city would be Golan. This is on the east of Jordan, not as far north as the furthest of these cities on the west side (Kedesh), but

Golan was a more northern location. Golan was in Bashan which belonged to Manasseh. This made six cities of refuge, spread across the entire land of Israel; three on the east side of Jordan and three on the west.

Next Joshua, Eleazar, and the heads of the tribes would hear from the head of the tribe of Levi who would remind them Moses had commanded cities be given to the tribe of Levi. (Num. 35:1-8) This tribe would own no land division as the work of God would be their possession, but this did not mean the Levites did not have cattle and other possessions that needed a place to be, not to mention families that needed places to live. Thus, as they were all here at Shiloh the various tribes would give the Levites cities within their possessions. The choice as to what families out of the Levites would specifically get what, was done the same way each tribe was given divisions, and that was by casting lots. The first lot would come up for the family of the Kohathites which specifically included Aaron's family. This was the family slated with the care of the tabernacle, and that, of course, included those who would serve as the High Priest. This branch of the Kohathites would be given cities in the divisions of Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin. This would include thirteen cities in all. The rest of the Kohathites would be given cities in the divisions of Ephraim, Dan, and Manasseh. This would include ten cities in all. The next lot was that of the family of Gershon. They would get cities in the divisions of Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, and in the land of Bashan which belonged to Manasseh. This would include thirteen cities in all. The next lot was for that of Merari. This family would get cities out of the divisions of Reuben, Gad,

and Zebulun. This would include twelve cities in all. All these cities were given to the tribe of Levi just as God had told Moses it was to be done. The Levites would own these cities and the immediate surrounding houses and land.

Next, we are given the names of the specific cities given to the Levite families, and again we start with the specific family of Aaron. We are told Aaron's family was given the city of Hebron. This was one of the cities of refuge, which again emphasizes how much the refuge issue was not about ownership but simply the fact they were cities to be used for the purpose of sheltering those who had killed unintentionally. That said, this is also that main city given to Caleb, but understand that while we may look at this as a, give up something that is mine for the sake of the Levites thing, to the tribes of Israel it should have been an honor to give a city to the tribe slated with God's service. Knowing the kind of man Caleb was, there should be little doubt as to why Hebron was given to the Levites. We also see the land surrounding these cities continued to be held by the tribes that owned the division they laid in. This means the Levites owned the city itself, surrounding houses and the land that went with them, but not the more extensive land that might be considered these cities' "domain." This is pointed out in assuring us Caleb's family still possessed the region of land in spite of giving the city of Hebron specifically to the Levites. We are then told by name the rest of the cities given to the family of Aaron which were in Judah and Simeon, and all these included nine cities. We are then given the names of the cities given to this family that were in Benjamin, and this included four

cities which gave this family thirteen cities in all.

For the remainder of the family of Kohathites we are given the names for four cities in Ephraim, four cities in Dan, and two cities in Manasseh. This gave them ten cities in all. To the family of Gershon was given another one of the cities of refuge which was Golan in Bashan. One other city is named, giving them two cities in Manasseh. In Issachar this family was given four cities which are named, and in Asher they were given four. In Naphtali, Kedesh was given to this family which is another city of refuge, and two more are named giving three in Naphtali. In total, the Gershonites were given thirteen cities. For the family of Merari there are four cities named in Zebulun and four in Reuben. In Gad they were given the city of Ramoth which is a city of refuge, and three more are named giving them four in Gad. This gave the family of Merari twelve cities in total. Overall, this gave to the tribe of Levi forty-eight cities with all the surrounding houses and the land belonging to those houses. While this may seem to be a lot of cities considering what is named for other tribes, we should keep in mind the cities named for them were mostly those major cities needed to trace borders and which their division included. Many more smaller towns and settled places existed. The other fact is that Levi was given cities so they could continually focus on the work of The Lord and not the development process of smaller places and open lands. Other tribes owned not just cities but all the land of their entire division. This gave other tribes the ability to build whatever cities and housing they chose to build in spite of how

many or few places already existed.

After all this was accomplished we are told God had not failed to do anything He had promised to do. God had given Israel all the land He had promised He would give, and this included land whether they had taken it or not, which means Israel could expand if they chose to because God had not failed to fulfill His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in this matter. It also meant those Canaanites the various tribes failed to drive out were true failures on the part of the people and not because God in any way didn't allow them to be driven out. We often fail God, but He never fails us. Thus, God had truly given Israel rest at this point, and they were ready to begin living their lives as God intended them to and had been preparing them to do since the day He brought them out of Egypt. Due to this truth, Joshua calls the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh and commends them on fulfilling the promise they made to Moses that their men would come across the Jordan river along with the rest of Israel in order to take this land. This they had promised because they wanted the land on the east side of Jordan, and due to this promise Moses had given it to them. Now Joshua reminds them they would always be a part of Israel, and as such they were to follow the Law and serve The Lord overall without fail just as would be expected of the entire nation. With this, he blessed them and sent them to their homes on the east side of Jordan to live in peace.

Let's stay in God's Word!

