**Survey of Old Testament**

**Joshua 16–17 The allotments for the Joseph tribes**

1. The powerful house of Joseph, made up of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, inherited the rich territory of central Canaan. Because Joseph kept the whole family alive during the famine in Egypt, the patriarch Jacob ordained that Joseph’s two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, should be made founders and heads of tribes along with their uncles (Gen. 48:5). Their territory in Canaan was in many respects the most beautiful and fertile.
2. But the men of Ephraim, like those of Judah, did not completely drive out the Canaanites from their region. Motivated by a materialistic attitude, they chose to put the Canaanites under tribute to gain additional wealth. That proved to be a fatal mistake for them in later centuries. In the time of the Judges, the arrangement was reversed as the Canaanites rose up and enslaved the Israelites. In addition to the historical lesson there is a spiritual principle here. It is all too easy for a believer to tolerate and excuse some pet sin only to wake up some day to the grim realization that it has risen up to possess and drive him to spiritual defeat and death. It pays to deal with sin decisively and harshly.
3. The same tragic mistake made by the Ephraimites (see 16:10) is now recorded of the Manassites. They opted wrongly to force the people of their land into forced labor rather than drive out the inhabitants of those cities.

**Joshua 18-19 The Allotments of the Remaining Land**

1. Shiloh appears to have been a town about fifteen miles from Jerusalem, in the tribe of Ephraim, and nearly in the center of the whole land. To this place both the camp of Israel, and the ark of the Lord, were removed from Gilgal, after a residence there of seven years. Here the tabernacle remained one hundred and thirty years.
2. So God provided for the needs of each tribe, though in some cases parts of their inheritances were still in the hands of the enemy. The Israelites were to possess the land by faith, trusting God to enable them to defeat their foes. Failure to do so would be to live in poverty and weakness, conditions which God did not desire for His people.
3. Whereas Caleb’s inheritance was determined first (14:6–15), Joshua’s was last. Only after all the tribes had received their allotments did Joshua ask for his. What a selfless spirit he possessed, and how his behavior contrasts with many church people who only ask “What’s in it for me?” Joshua’s choice of land further reveals his humility. He asked for a city in the rugged, infertile, mountainous district of his own tribe (Ephraim).

**Joshua 20 The Apportionment of the Cities of Refuge**

1. The Lord God now commands Joshua to fulfill that which He spoke to Moses, to establish the cities of refuge. The concept for these cities of shelter was expressed to Moses in Exodus 21:13; Numbers 35:6; and Deuteronomy 19:2. Moses actually appointed the cities east of the Jordan in Deuteronomy 4:41–43. The reference to Moses here gives testimony that Joshua was acquainted with the Pentateuch, since the words quoted are from Numbers and Deuteronomy.

**Joshua 21 The Apportionment of the Levitical Cities**

1. The descendants of Levi were not given a specific inheritance, but were scattered throughout Israel (Gen 49:7) so that they may teach the law to the tribes and exert spiritual influence on them. When the heads of the Levites appeared before Eleazar and Joshua at Shiloh, they reminded them that the Lord had commanded Moses (Num 35) to give them cities to dwell in.

**Joshua 22 The Eastern Tribes Return Home**

1. Joshua summoned the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh to Shiloh. His purpose in doing so is clearly stated in verse 6, so Joshua blessed them, and sent them home. For seven long years they had helped their brothers take the land, now it was time to go back to their families.  Joshua’s blessing consisted of three aspects: (1) to commend them on their faithful and valiant service to the other tribes; (2) to commission them to return to the land of their inheritance; and (3) to charge them concerning their continued responsibilities to the Lord God.
2. No sooner had the two and one-half tribes arrived at the banks of the Jordan, they erected a great altar, large and visible in all directions, for all to see. When this came to the attention of the other tribes, the whole congregation gathered at Shiloh, to go up to war. The children of Israel had assumed that their brethren erected the great altar for an evil intent.
3. Phinehas, the son of Eleazar the priest, led a group of the heads of each family on a fact-finding mission to the two and one-half tribes.
4. The Jordan Valley was a barrier between the eastern and western tribes. The two and one-half tribes feared that in the years to come succeeding generations of children from the West Bank would taunt their children claiming they were not a part of the people of God. The altar was built to be a witness between the eastern and western tribes of their bond in Yahweh, physically and spiritually. It was built on the western side of Jordan so “their” altar would be a part of Israel’s land, much like a man puts a ring on his wife’s hand instead of his own to show the bond between them. God forbid that we should rebel against the Lord.
5. When Phinehas and the others heard the words, it pleased them. He knew that brotherly love “rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth” (1 Cor 13:6). This is an attitude many Christian brethren would do well to foster.

**Joshua 23-24 Joshua’s Farewell and Death**

We commonly think of Joshua as a great soldier, and he was; but here we see him as a great shepherd with a loving concern for his people. He had served the Lord and the nation faithfully; now he was concerned lest the people depart from the Lord and lose their inheritance. This was the same concern Peter had before he died (2 Peter 1:12–15) and also the Apostle Paul (Acts 20:13). How tragic it is when one generation sacrifices to obtain God’s blessing and a new generation comes along and loses everything.