

Read the Whole Bible with Pastor

Monday (May 29) – Joshua 18, 19

Five of the tribes have already received their inheritance (Chapters 13–17), but seven remain: Benjamin, Simeon, Zebulun, Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, and Dan. Initially, Israel had camped at Gilgal, which was near Jericho. But now, having conquered much of the land, the tabernacle is erected at Shiloh, a more central location. The tabernacle will remain in Shiloh throughout the period of the Judges of Israel.

Benjamin, a smaller tribe, receives his inheritance between the borders of Judah and Joseph (Ephraim). Remember that Benjamin and Joseph were both children of Rachel, Jacob's favorite wife. It would have been expected that their two tribes would have remained close. However, it was Judah who offered his life in exchange for Benjamin (Genesis 44:33) and received the Messianic blessing. Later when the nation of Israel is split into two kingdoms, the tribe of Benjamin will side with Judah, choosing faithfulness to God over familial attachments.

Simeon, with Levi, had been cursed on Jacob's deathbed for their treachery against the men of Shechem: "I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel" (Genesis 49:7). But God, in His mercy, turns even this curse into their good. Levi is scattered in Israel. Instead of inheriting land, the Levites inherit the Lord God, and they are scattered among the people to serve as pastors. Simeon is scattered by receiving a portion of land within the boundaries of Judah. This also turns out to be a blessing: Over time Simeon is assimilated into Judah, becoming partakers of the Messianic blessing.

Tuesday (May 30) – Joshua 20, 21

Previously God had instructed the Israelites to designate six cities of refuge, three on each side of the Jordan (Numbers 35). In the case of accidental man-slaughter, a man could flee to one of these cities and be protected from the avenger of blood (relative of the dead man). Now, having conquered most of the land, Joshua carries out God's instructions to Moses, and causes the Israelites to choose these six cities of refuge.

In chapter 21 the Levites are given cities among the tribes in which to live. As the spiritual leaders of the people, their physical needs were to be provided for by the people whom they served. The same is true for pastors today. St. Paul writes that "those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel (1 Corinthians 9:14). The cities appointed for the Levites included the six cities of refuge.

Wednesday (May 31) – Joshua 22

During the life of Moses, the Israelites had conquered a large portion of land on the east side of the Jordan. Although this was technically outside of the Canaan, it was good land, and Reuben, Gad, and half of the tribe of Manasseh had asked Moses to receive this land as their inheritance. Moses had granted their request on one condition: that they would cross over the Jordan when the time came to help their brothers in the conquest of Canaan. The two and a half tribes fulfilled their obligation. Now, in chapter 22, Joshua releases them from military

service and sends them back across the Jordan to their homes. But on the way home, they almost start a civil war by building a memorial altar to the Lord. The other tribes, thinking that the altar is meant for pagan worship gear up for war, planning to exterminate idolatry from Israel. But Phineas, the high priest and grandson of Aaron, questions the two and a half tribes and learns the truth: they had set up the altar, not to worship strange gods, but as a remembrance of the true God. The other tribes relent and battle is avoided.

Thursday (June 1) – Joshua 23, 24

The aging Joshua gives a final address to the Israelites. He exhorts them to serve the Lord, and yet, knowing that they will not, warns them of the consequences that they will soon encounter. The people protest, saying, “We will serve the Lord, for He is our God” (24:18). But Joshua answers, “You cannot serve the Lord, for He is a holy God” (24:19). Joshua’s words reflect our inability to choose God or come to Him. We are not saved by our own power or efforts, but solely by the grace of God as He works through His Holy Spirit to create and sustain faith within our hearts. Even so, God warns of the severe consequences of departing from Him and His Word. After the death of Joshua, the people would continue to serve the Lord for a time—until the death of the elders who had known and outlived Joshua.

Friday (June 2) – Judges 1

The book of Judges contains twelve cycles of apostasy and repentance. When the people serve God, He blesses and prospers them. But when they forget the Lord and turn to idols, He hands them over to destruction by their enemies. Then the people cry out to God in repentance, and He sends them a judge (a spiritual and military leader) to rescue them. Each time the people fall, their descent into sin grows worse, and the final cycle of Judges is nothing short of horrific.

Saturday (June 3) – Judges 2

The Israelites have already failed to obey the voice of the Lord (v. 2). This is but the beginning of their slide into degeneracy. By verse 11 they are openly serving the Baals and have forsaken the Lord. God calls this idolatry “harlotry,” which reflects the marriage relationship between Christ and His bride, the Church (v. 17).

Sunday (June 4) – Judges 3

Even after the conquest of Canaan, God had allowed many enemy nations to remain in pockets of the land. This is much the same as how sin remains in the life of a Christian even after baptism. Like the ancient Israelites, we too are called to continue the fight against sin even after becoming children of God.

Three of the twelve judges of Israel are found in Chapter 3: Othniel, nephew of Caleb, Ehud, and Shamgar. During the life of each judge, the land has rest. But as soon as the judge dies, the people return to idolatry. Without good leaders God’s people always fall into false belief, despair, and other great shame and vice. May God grant faithful pastors to His Church!