

## *Norwood's Notes: Brief Summaries of Bible Stories*

These "notes" are intended to provide a general overview of the basic stories of the Bible in the hope of building greater biblical knowledge and encouraging Bible reading and study.

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### **10 - Highlights from Joshua 9 – Judges 2, "From Joshua to the Judges"**

When the people of the great city of Gibeon heard of the Israelite victories over Jericho and Ai, they sent representatives to Joshua wearing worn out clothes and sandals to appear to have traveled a great distance. They told Joshua and the Israelite leaders that they were from a distant land and wanted to make a peace treaty with them. Thinking that they were from afar, the Israelites made a covenant with the Gibeonites to not attack them. But, only three days later, the Israelites learned that the Gibeonites lived nearby and had successfully deceived Joshua and the leaders of Israel because they had not sought a word from the Lord before making a covenant of peace with Gibeon. Because of the covenant of peace, the Gibeonites were spared (Josh 9).

Then, five kings joined forces to attack the Gibeonites because of their alliance with the Israelites. And, because of the treaty, Joshua had to defend Gibeon. Israel's best and most courageous warriors marched all night to engage the enemy. The Lord assured Joshua, "*Do not fear them, for I have given them into your hands*" (Josh 10:8 ESV). As Israel attacked, God threw the enemy into a panic and even showered down great hailstones from the sky upon them, destroying more of them than even the Israelite warriors did. The Lord even caused the sun to stay in the sky, not setting for about a whole day, enabling Israel to overcome their enemies, defend Gibeon, and even put the five kings to death (Josh 10).

The kings of Northern Canaan responded to Joshua's victories over the five kings and the subsequent victories in Southern Canaan by joining forces into a "*...great horde, in number like the sand that is on the seashore, with very many horses and chariots*" (Josh 11:4 ESV). God encouraged Joshua not to be afraid of this massive force and promised victory to Israel. Though outnumbered and without the horses or chariots, the Israelites overcame their powerful enemies.

Joshua obeyed the instructions left by Moses and gave allotments of the land to the various tribes of Israel (Josh 11). Because the Tribe of Levi was set aside for priestly duties, they had no tribal land allotment, but were dispersed throughout the land among the various tribes (Josh 13) and were given pasturelands and cities among the tribes called "cities of refuge," where a person who accidentally killed another

could voluntarily be confined and receive refuge from the vengeance of the dead person's loved ones (Josh 20 & 21).

Even as the land was being distributed among the tribes, there were still unconquered areas that the Lord promised to Israel. Caleb of the tribe of Judah, who had been one of the spies Moses had sent into Canaan over forty years prior to this new generation obediently entering the land, had been kept by God for his faithfulness. He was eighty five years old, but was still a strong warrior. With Joshua's blessing, Caleb conquered Hebron, even driving out the mighty warriors that were there in fort cities, because the Lord was with him (Josh 14).

The tribes that had asked to have their land allotments on the eastern side of the Jordan River had obeyed the command of Moses and fought with their fellow Israelites in the conquest of Canaan. Joshua now allowed them to return to their lands across the river. As they returned, they built a large altar by the river, which stirred up the anger of the tribes west of the river as they thought the eastern tribes were disobeying the law of God and establishing a new religion. But, the eastern tribes explained that the altar was not for worship, but for remembrance, so that it would never be forgotten that they were part of Israel and shared in the covenant with the Lord also, even though they remained on the eastern side of the Jordan River (Jos 22).

Joshua gathered the people at a place called "Shechem" in order to reaffirm the covenant by telling the story of how the Lord had delivered them. Joshua challenged the people to live in complete obedience to the Lord, turning away from the wicked practices of their ancestors. Then Joshua proclaimed "*...as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD*" (Josh 24:15 ESV). The people responded, "*...we also will serve the Lord for he is our God*" (Josh 24:18 ESV).

The people faithfully served the Lord all of the days they were led by Joshua. Joshua, the son of Nun, died when he was 110 years old. He was buried at Shechem. The High Priest, Eleazar, son of Aaron, also died, and he was buried in the hill country of the land of the Tribe of Ephraim.

The people settled in the Promised Land, but the conquest of the whole of the territory continued and there were many, who had not been driven out, still remaining in the region. The generation who had entered the Promised Land with Joshua died and there arose another generation afterward that was not faithful to the Lord and followed after the wicked and idolatrous ways of the people around them (Judges 2). As the Lord's protective hand of grace withdrew because of the wickedness of the people, they would be plundered by their enemies and cry out to the Lord for mercy. The Lord would mercifully raise up leaders, called "judges," from among the people, through whom he would deliver them. But, once the judge died, the people would fall back into their sinful ways. The Lord did not drive out their remaining enemies from among them because of the Israelites' constant breaking of his holy law.