

Test #4: Story of the Old Testament (Fill in the blanks)

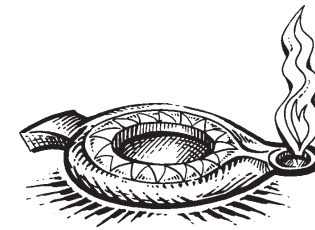
| ERA | FIGURE | LOCATION | STORYLINE SUMMARY |
|-------|--------|----------|---|
| _____ | _____ | _____ | Adam is created by God, but he _____ and _____ God's original _____ for man. |
| _____ | _____ | _____ | Abraham is _____ by God to _____ a people to _____ God to the world. |
| _____ | _____ | _____ | Moses _____ the Hebrew people from _____ in Egypt and then gives them the _____ . |
| _____ | _____ | _____ | Joshua leads the _____ of the _____ . |

BASIC BIBLE STUDY

An Introductory Guide To Understanding The Scriptures

PART SEVEN

The Conquest Era



"Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet,
and a light unto my path"
PSALM 119:105

The Israelites had wandered in the wilderness for 40 years because of rebellion and unbelief at Kadesh Barnea. Now, after the death of Moses, they stood at another critical fork in the road: they were back on the border of the Promised Land of Canaan.

As the entire host of the Israelites remained east of Jordan (trans-Jordan area), preparations were made for a military move across the Jordan to occupy the land in the cis-Jordan. This was the area that which had been previously promised to Abraham and his descendants almost 700 years before. Now the cup of iniquity of the people who lived in that land was now full; God's time of judgment has come (cf. **Genesis 15:16**); their period of grace has come to an end - and the children of Israel are poised to possess their land.

SCOPE OF THE BOOK

The **Book of Joshua** takes the story of the history of Israel on from the death of Moses, through the conquest of Canaan, to the death of Joshua. **Chapters 1-12** cover the first 5 or 6 years after Moses' death; the events recounted in the last two chapters (**23&24**) probably took place about 20 years later.

THE ARC OF BIBLE HISTORY
#4 ... THE CONQUEST ERA



THE DUAL PURPOSE IN THE CONQUEST: i. THE CLAIMING OF AN INHERITANCE AND ii. THE PROSECUTION OF GOD'S HOLY WAR

This occupation of the land fulfilled a dual purpose. It was not only **a land for the children of Israel to dwell in**; it was to act as **God's holy war against the inhabitants of Canaan**. This dual purpose of God is clearly discernible in **Deuteronomy 9:4**. God has earmarked the land of Canaan for His chosen people - and He has elected to use His people **as the instrument in prosecuting His holy war against the idolatrous inhabitants of Canaan**.

In **Numbers 33:52-54** God instructs the people about their duty when they entered into the land of Canaan. They were obliged to drive out all the inhabitants of the land and destroy all the tokens of their

TESTS

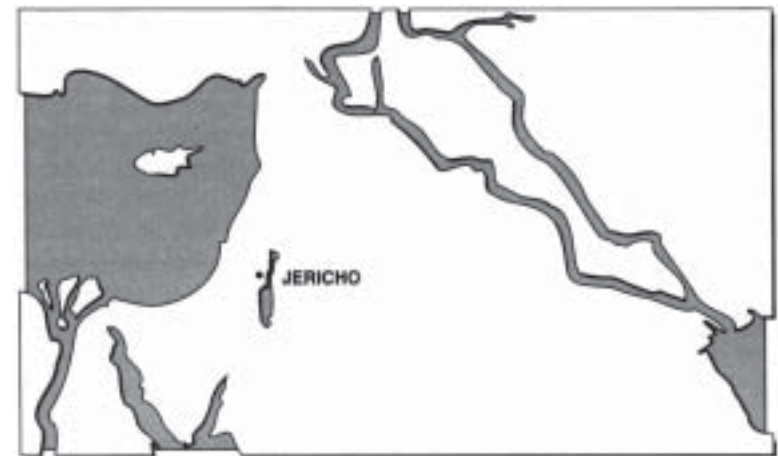
Test #1: Four Major Events in the Conquest Era (Write in the correct event from the options at left)

| OPTIONS: | EVENT: | DESCRIPTION: |
|----------|--------|---------------------------------|
| Jordan | _____ | The defeat of Canaan |
| Jericho | _____ | A miraculous parting of water |
| Conquest | _____ | Partitioning the Land |
| Dominion | _____ | A miraculous conquest of a city |

Test #2: Story-Line Summary (Fill in the blanks from memory)

| ERA | STORYLINE SUMMARY |
|----------|---------------------------------------|
| Conquest | Joshua leads the _____ of the _____ . |

Test #3: The Geography of the Conquest Era (Draw an arrow from Jericho across to the Mediterranean Sea. Then draw an arrow into the southern half of the land. Now draw an arrow into the northern half of the land. This represents the geographical movement of the Conquest Era).



iii. He did not complete mopping-up operations against his defeated foes.

Dr Graham Scroggie has said of the account of the conquest in the book of Joshua: "It is also made clear that what might have been fully possessed was not, because of **indolence** (18:3), or **indifference** (16:10; 17:12), or **inability** (15:63; 17:12)."

As a result, the Canaanite tribes were able to recover to a considerable extent and became a constant moral, political and religious thorn in the flesh to Israel. The warning of **Numbers 33:55&56** is about to come true! "But if ye will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you; then it shall come to pass, that those which ye let remain of them shall be pricks in your eyes, and thorns in your sides, and shall vex you in the land wherein ye dwell. Moreover it shall come to pass, that I shall do unto you, as I thought to do unto them."

The Israelites did not drive out all the inhabitants of the land: in certain instances they adopted the religious practices of the original inhabitants. The situation developed to such a pitch that the inhabitants of the land were not as bad as the Israelites! As a result, God will drive out His own people from the land, either through dispersion or, ultimately, via captivity.

idolatry - their pictures, molten images and high places. The Biblical accounts of Israel's entry into Canaan record the actual **destruction** of only a few cities. They emphasize that Israel drove out the former inhabitants and **took over** (inherited) their property. A desolate land with its towns in ruins would be of little use to the Israelites as they emerged from 40 years of semi-nomadic life. They needed somewhere 'ready-made' to live. What had to be destroyed was the multitude of pagan shrines of the Canaanites with their cultic paraphernalia.

IDOLATRY OF CANAAN

Until the discovery of the Ugarit Tablets in 1928, the extent to which the religious system had corrupted itself in the land of Canaan was not known. The Ugarit Tablets provide information on the demonic,



licentious system of 'worship' which was being practised in the land of Canaan. It is this evil system of worship that God determined to wipe out. Throughout the books of **Numbers** and **Deuteronomy** (cf. **Deuteronomy 11:16&17**), the Lord warned His people to guard themselves against this corrupt system of worship. Therefore God gives the command that every one of the inhabitants of the land is to be slain: if even one survives, that one will corrupt the nation of Israel - and the programme Israel was to follow would be polluted. Therefore, in God's holy war, the Israelites were to perform the function of His military spearhead, eliminating all traces of Baalism from the land:

they were sent in to purge it of these vile practices before they populated it. The Israelites must always remember that God, not Baal, has given them the land - and He will be responsible for granting (or withholding) fertility for them in that land.

POSSIBILITY OF NO ISRAELITE CASUALTIES

If the Israelites had obeyed God's instructions to the letter, they could have conquered the entire land of Canaan, cleansed it from corner to corner, yet not have sustained a casualty. **Numbers 31:49** states, following a battle in which the Israelites were wholly obedient to the Lord, "And they said unto Moses, 'Thy servants have taken the sum of the men of war which are under our charge, and there lacketh not one man of us.'"

The book of Joshua also underlines this fact (**Joshua 6**).

FULFILMENT OF PROPHECY

The second aspect of the occupation of Canaan demonstrates the fulfilment of prophecy. When the 2 million+ Israelites left the borders of Egypt, they were little better than a mob. While a people, they were still not a nation.

Three things are required for the status of being a nation.

1. **There must be a people.**
2. **There must be a constitution.** On Mount Sinai, via the Ten Commandments and the ordinances which God gave to Moses, the constitution was given.
3. **There must be a land.** Once Israel cross over the Jordan and occupy the land of Canaan, they will become a nation. (cf. 1406 BC with AD 1948).

I. Review:

Fill in the blanks to bring the chart up-to-date with this era.

| ERA | FIGURE | LOCATION | STORYLINE SUMMARY |
|-------|--------|----------|--|
| _____ | _____ | _____ | Adam is created by God, but he _____ and _____ God's original _____ for man. |
| _____ | _____ | _____ | Abraham is _____ by God to _____ a people to _____ God to the world. |
| _____ | _____ | _____ | Moses _____ the Hebrew people from _____ in Egypt and then gives them the _____. |
| _____ | _____ | _____ | To be completed in this study. |

II. Story-Line Summary:

Joshua leads the conquest of the Promised Land.

The concluding chapter of the book, **Joshua 24**, relates how Joshua gathered the people around him at Shechem - that place where Abraham built his first altar and where God first appeared to him (cf. **Genesis 12:6**). **Joshua 24:32** gives us an insight into the type of reverence that the people had for this place ... they buried the bones of Joseph there.

In Joshua's speech, he reminds them of God's mighty acts on their behalf throughout their history. Commencing with the "fathers" who "dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time", he speaks of God's activities with respect to Terah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and Aaron. He traces their path from Egypt, through the land of the Amorites, over Jordan and into the land which had been reserved for their inheritance. This land is uniquely described in **Joshua 24:13** in these terms: "And I have given you a land for which ye did not labour, and cities which ye built not, and ye dwell in them; of the vineyards and oliveyards which ye planted not do ye eat."

An exhortation is given to drive out the false gods from the midst of Israel. It seems inconceivable that this could be the case; that, after viewing God's tremendous acts on their behalf, they still had these false gods in their possession, but **Joshua 24:14-25** proves that they were still wavering between the worship of these idols and the worship of Jehovah. Joshua presses them to make a choice. Three options are given:

- i. The gods of the Chaldees,
- ii. the gods of the Amorites,
- iii. The Lord, Jehovah.

On three occasions, the people avow their determination to worship the Lord (**Joshua 24:18,21&24**). A stone was raised in commemoration of the covenant of that hour (**Joshua 24:26-28**).

DEATH OF JOSHUA

At 110 years of age, Joshua died (**Joshua 24:29**). Israel did serve the Lord all the days of Joshua - and for the duration of the lives of the elders who had served alongside Joshua (**Joshua 24:31**). The book of Judges, however, tells a different story! **While Joshua conquered the land of Canaan in a series of dramatic victories, he did make three political mistakes, which led to disaster in the period of the judges.**

- i. He failed to take the coastline from the Philistines and Phoenicians,
- ii. He made a fatal league with the Gibeonites,

- request (**Numbers 32:1-5**);
- privilege (**21:3**);
- claim (**15:19**);
- and faithfulness (**14:13&14**)."

A review of some former events is included in **Chapter 13, (vs 21&22)**, where the victories over the Amorites and the killing of Balaam are remembered.

Approximately 6-7 years have passed on entry into **Joshua 14**. These years have been spent in the conquest of the central, southern and northern confederacies. Caleb says that he was 40 years old when Moses sent him to spy out the land; but, by Joshua 14, he was 85 years of age (**Joshua 14:7&10**). This brings the time (approx.) to 1399 BC.

Joshua 14 details the allotment of the Cisjordan region to the nine and a half tribes. (The record of this allotment continues through **Joshua 14-21**).

CITIES OF REFUGE

Joshua 20 identifies the 6 cities designated as "cities of refuge." These were:

- Bezer, Ramoth and Golan** on the east of Jordan;
- Kedesh, Shechem and Hebron** on the west of the River.

2. DISPUTE CONCERNING A BORDER ALTAR: (**Joshua 22**).

Joshua 22 reveals how the fighting men from the tribes of Judah, Gad and Manasseh return to the Transjordan after a misunderstanding and conflict.

3. DISCOURSE - AND DEATH - OF JOSHUA: (**Joshua 23&24**).

Though extremely aged, Joshua's principles and sense of loyalty to the commandments of the Lord remains unswerving (**Joshua 23:1**). He reminds the people that they are not to associate with the people of the land; they are to love the Lord their God (**Joshua 23:7**). He further assures them, in **verse 13**, that if the Israelites allowed the people of the land to remain, this would prove their undoing. What a testimony Joshua gives to the faithfulness of the Lord in **Joshua 23:14** - and what a confident prediction (and fiercesome warning!) he gives concerning future years (**Joshua 23:15&16**).

III. Story-Line Expansion: There are four main events in the Conquest Era:

- 1. Jordan**
- 2. Jericho**
- 3. Conquest**
- 4. Dominion**

1. JORDAN: A MIRACULOUS PARTING OF WATER (Joshua 1-5)

Moses dies, and God hand-picks Joshua to succeed him. Joshua's first challenge is to cross the Jordan River at flood stage. God commands him to prepare the nation for a ceremonial procession and to begin walking, priests first, toward the Jordan River. When the priests touched water, God would part the water for them. (This is the second miraculous parting of water that God performed for Israel. The first was the parting of the Red Sea). The people respond, and God parts the Jordan River for a distance of about 20 miles. They cross without incident, and the water begins flowing again.

(α) THE PREPARATION: Joshua 1&2.

There was both inward and outward preparation for entrance into the Land of Promise. The inward preparation was made up of several charges that appear in the first chapter.

- The charge of Jehovah to Joshua; **1:1-9**. When Moses died, Joshua was an obvious choice to succeed him in leading the nation (cf. **Deuteronomy 34:9**). This account of Joshua's accession is one of the great chapters of the Bible.

- The charge of Joshua to the people; **1:10-15**

- The charge of the people to Joshua; **1:16-18**.

Two words summarize these charges: Obedience and Courage. Obedience was to be shown in the light of the Word of God; courage was to be shown in the face of the foe. This section of the book underlines the truth that courage is the natural outflow of obedience.

The outward preparation is mentioned in **Joshua 2**. Spies were sent to Jericho to determine the strength of the enemy and the scope of the effort that stretched before them. Joshua's intention was to make his

BBS#6 • The Conquest Era

first thrust into the centre of the land of Canaan, driving a wedge between north and south. Jericho - the 'city of palm trees' - stood directly in his path, an obvious first target.

On the previous spying mission (**Numbers 13**) twelve spies had been sent into the land of Canaan: this time there are only two (suggestive in that only two of the former spying party had encouraged the people to go forward).

WHY RAHAB?

The two spies made their way to the house of a harlot by the name of Rahab. Why go to such a questionable place? **This would be the best place they could go in the quest for information:** the house of a harlot was a place where the merchants, military men and politicians all spent some time, therefore a wide range of information about a city could be obtained there.

When the presence of the men became known to the inhabitants of Jericho, the two spies made an arrangement with Rahab: if she would hide them and put their pursuers off their track, then her life, and the lives of her family would be saved when the Israelites came up to conquer the city of Jericho. A crimson cord, hung from her window, would identify her house when the invasion began (**Joshua 2:21**).

RAHAB ... MOTIVATED BY FAITH, NOT FEAR

Rahab is an intriguing individual. In **Joshua 2:9** she uses the sacred name for "LORD" - (JEHOVAH) - and therefore identifies herself, not as an idolater, but one who believes in the Lord of the Hebrews (or has at least come to believe in Him since the spies have appeared at her house). Her harbouring of the spies stemmed not from fear, but from faith that Israel's God was the true God. **Hebrews 11:31** commends her faith - not her immorality. Her testimony in **Joshua 2:10** makes it clear that the inhabitants of Canaan were well acquainted with what the God of the Israelites had done. What is particularly interesting in her testimony is that she speaks of the Red Sea having been dried up. This event had taken place some 40 years earlier - and yet Rahab knew of it!

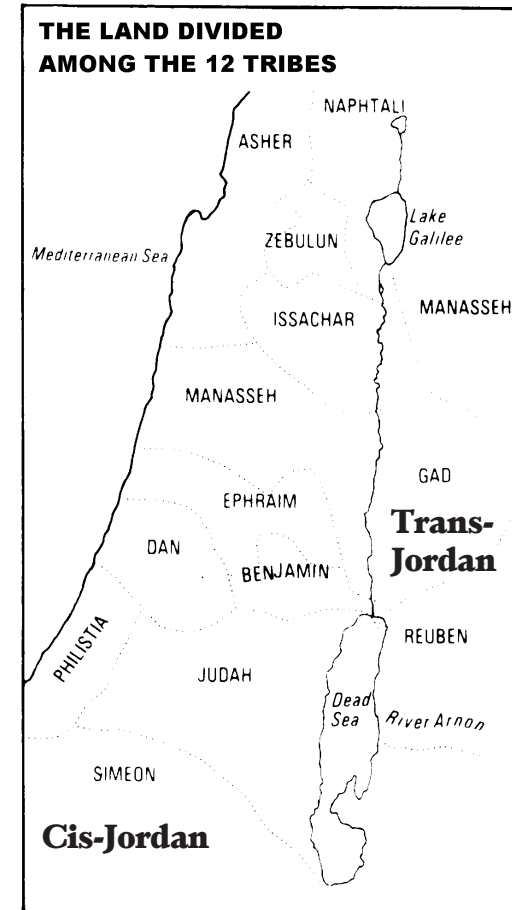
EVIDENCE OF FEAR IN CANAAN

Evidently, the inhabitants of Canaan had been charting the progress of the Israelites since their departure from Egypt. Now, as they looked across into the Transjordan region, they would have seen a huge collection of people, led by a God who had already dried up the Red Sea before them, and had granted them victory over the kings in the

BBS#6 • The Conquest Era

selected their land in the Transjordan area (cf. **Joshua 13:23-33**), the remainder of the land (Cisjordan) is to be divided between "the nine tribes and the half tribe of Manasseh" (**Joshua 13:7**).

[The fact that the tribe of Levi does not receive a physical inheritance in the land is reaffirmed in **Joshua 13:14&33**].



"There is here **much more than** a mere recital of place names. The distribution of the conquered land among the tribes was not determined by caprice, but by principles which all could appreciate, such as:

- the capacity of the holder (**17:16; 19:9&47**);
- the rights of conquest (**17:14,17&18**);
- providence (**13:6; 14:2**);

On at least 12 occasions in **the 10th chapter**, Israel is emphatically reminded that their enemies are to be utterly destroyed. The reason for Joshua's triumphs was clear; **Joshua 10:42**: "And all these kings and their land did Joshua take at one time, **because** the LORD God of Israel fought for Israel."

Joshua and his forces now return to their base of operations in Gilgal (**Joshua 10:43**).

3. THE NORTHERN CAMPAIGN: **Joshua 11.**

Joshua 11 describes the beginning of the northern campaign, concluding with the words in **the 23rd verse**: "So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the LORD said unto Moses; and Joshua gave it for an inheritance unto Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. And the land rested from war." The battle of Merom (**11:5-9**) was the key to this campaign.

Joshua 12 gives a 'round-up' of all the victories up to this stage - a total of **31 kings had fallen victim to Joshua's sword (Joshua 12:24)**. These verses are a witness to the faithfulness and power of Jehovah - and also serve as an encouragement to the future Israel. It is a good practice for us to keep such a memorial before the Lord; of battles fought and victories won.

**4. DOMINION:
PARTITIONING THE LAND
(Joshua 13-20)**

Each of the twelve tribes of Israel is given a land area by lot and is responsible for finalizing dominion over that area. All twelve tribes inhabit their area and take up a relationship of loose federation with the other tribes.

Three key areas are dealt with in the remaining chapters of the book of **Joshua**.

1. THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE LAND AMONG THE TRIBES:
Joshua 13-21.

Prior to his death, Joshua begins to apportion the land of Canaan between the tribes of Israel. Since two and a half tribes have already

Transjordan area (**Deuteronomy 2&3**). It was a frightening sight! They stood in fear of their lives. (A reference to their fear of the Israelites is made in **Joshua 2:11**).

(b) THE PASSAGE: **Joshua 3&4.**

In a remarkable display of power (reminiscent of His parting of the waters of the Red Sea), the Lord dries up a passage through the Jordan River to allow Israel to cross into Canaan. He had good reasons to perform this miracle.

WHY GOD DRIED UP THE JORDAN

1. One of the obvious reasons why God dried up the Jordan River was to facilitate the conquest of the land of Canaan for His people. At this time of year the snows of Mount Hermon were melting, the Jordan river would overflow its banks, and become as wide as one mile in places. It was about a mile wide opposite Jericho. At this time of year the inhabitants of Canaan had reason to feel very secure: no invading force would be able to cross the Jordan and attack them. The current of the Jordan was swift; enough rafts could not be made to ferry enough fighting men across so that a siege might be laid to any of the Canaanite cities. However, God causes the waters of the Jordan river to stand up in heaps and the river bed to dry up. The children of Israel may now march forward and possess the land of Canaan: a way of advance had been opened up for them.

2. A new generation has now succeeded the old: they too needed to witness the power of God in the physical universe. This demonstration of God's power would give them assurance as they went into the land of Canaan and were confronted with odds which, from a purely military perspective, would be impossible. The generation of the Israelites which came out of Egypt had witnessed the mighty power of God over the natural creation in the drying up of the Red Sea (**Exodus 14:15-31**). Accordingly, through the miracle of drying up the Jordan (**Joshua 3**), God reveals His power to the new generation in a similar way that He did to the previous generation of Israelites.

**Just the same, just the same,
God is just the same today!**

Many explanations have been tendered over the years as to how the Jordan river dried up. Most prominent among these explanations is the 'Landslide Theory.' The thought is that a landslide took place upstream and Joshua simply took advantage of the landslide to cross over. However, **Joshua 3:13** is prophetic. "And it shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests that bear the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of Jordan, that the waters of Jordan shall

be cut off from the waters that come down from above; and they shall stand upon an heap." Joshua could not possibly know that a landslide was going to take place.

The Israelites had all of their religious items with them. The tabernacle, representing the capital of God, is there; the ark and all the sacred vessels were there. **Joshua 3:15** makes a very definite comment when it says that: "And as they that bare the ark were come unto Jordan, and the feet of the priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the water, (for Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest.)" **Joshua 3:17** informs us that the priests carried the ark into the Jordan river - then the river dried up and the people crossed over on dry land.

3. Joshua's position as leader was confirmed in the drying up of the Jordan. Joshua had predicted this event (**Joshua 3:13**) and it happened. In this way Joshua's position was validated.

4. The drying up of the Jordan river issued in the psychological devastation of the Canaanites. To see Israel crossing over a dried up river shattered the security of the Canaanites. If, according to Rahab, the hearts of the people of Canaan had melted when they heard about the miracle at the Red Sea (**Joshua 2:10&11**), their hearts must have melted again when they saw the Jordan river dry up. **Joshua 5:1** confirms that this was the case.

A MEMORIAL TO GOD'S POWER

Customarily, generations which follow great events do not believe all the stories that are transmitted to them from those days. For this reason, the Lord (via Joshua) commanded the people to construct a memorial to this miraculous crossing of the Jordan; **Joshua 4:1-9**.

When the mound of stones was positioned, the water rushed in and covered them. In later years, when succeeding generations of the people of the Lord would look out over the Jordan and see a huge mound of stones deep beneath the Jordan, they would question, "Where did that mound of stones come from?" **Joshua 4:7** details the answer that would be given by the old men. **The stones would stand as proof that this great miracle had occurred.**

(c) THE PURIFICATION: **Joshua 5.**

This was the first act of Joshua once he crossed over the Jordan. After crossing the river, the children of Israel encamped in the Cisjordan area at Gilgal (Gilgal was situated between the Jordan and Jericho - about 6 miles from the former and 2 miles from the latter).

words, the total daylight hours of the day were one and one-half times normal.

HOW BIG IS GOD?

Essentially, our reaction to this passage in the Word of God is dependent on how big our God is. Since God spoke the heavens into existence (cf. **Hebrews 1:2&3; 11:3**), He can just as easily grind matters to a halt at a moments' notice - and reactivate them again. Matthew Henry proposes that: "Surely this stupendous miracle of the standing still of the sun was intended for something more than merely to give Israel so much the more time to find out and kill their enemies, which, without this, might have been done the next day."

He then proceeds to list **a number of very good reasons why this miraculous event took place:**

"1. God would hereby magnify Joshua (**Joshua 3:7**), as a particular favourite, and one whom He did delight to honour, being a type of Him who has all power both in heaven and in earth and whom the winds and the seas obey.

2. He would hereby notify to all the world what He was doing for His people Israel here in Canaan; the sun, the eye of the world, must be fixed for some hours upon Gibeon and the valley of Ajalon, as if to contemplate the great works of God there for Israel, and so to engage the children of men to look that way, and to enquire of this wonder done in the land, **2 Chronicles 32:31**. Proclamation was hereby made to all the neighbouring nations (cf. **Psalms 46:8, Joshua 9:9**).

3. He would hereby convince and confound those idolaters that worshipped the sun and moon and gave divine honours to them, by demonstrating that they were subject to the command of the God of Israel, and that, as high as they were, He was above them; and thus He would fortify His people against temptations to this idolatry, which He foresaw they would be addicted to (**Deuteronomy 4:19**), and which, notwithstanding this, they afterwards corrupted themselves with.

4. This miracle signified that in the latter days, when the light of the world was tending towards a night of darkness, the 'Sun of righteousness,' even our Joshua, should arise (**Malachi 4:2**), give check to the approaching night, and be the true light.

5. The arresting of the sun and moon in this day of battle prefigured the turning of the sun into darkness, and the moon into blood, in the last great and terrible day of the Lord."

There is no scientific explanation for this dynamic event (NASA has not proved it). Through it, God demonstrated again that the conquest of Canaan was His holy war - and He was in complete command.

This event introduces us to the remarkable occurrence of 'Joshua's Long Day' (10:12-14).

MIRACLE OF SUN AND MOON 'STANDING STILL'

Joshua 10:12-14 has been ridiculed for centuries. "Who ever heard of such a thing as the sun standing still? Do you not know that if the earth stood still, its inhabitants would be crushed because of the gravitational pull (it is only the revolving of the earth and its centripetal force that prevents us from being crushed)? Can you not imagine the colossal chaos that would be caused in the universe if things ground to a halt? There must be a better explanation for the events of **Joshua 10:12-14** than that!" As a result, a number of theories have been advanced to explain **Joshua 10:12-14** in a rationalistic fashion.

1. One theory centres on an extended period of light refraction, so that the day seemed longer.

2. Another theorist propounds that it could be possible that God gave the Israelites some kind of accelerated activity, with the result that they got twice as much done in the time (comparable to one of the old black and white movies - or running a video at double speed)!

3. Others dismiss the passage as purely poetic. It did not really happen, they contend. Though, as **Joshua 10:13** informs us, this event is also recorded in the book of Jasher (a human composition and collection of state-poems), this does not take away from the historicity of the event. It may be poetical in its record; it was certainly not poetical in reality!

Joshua 10:14 makes it plain that this incident was not merely poetic: it was an actual event.

REASONS TO BELIEVE THIS DAY WAS PROLONGED

- The verb *amad* is used (twice in **v13**), and it definitely indicates a change in pattern of movement.
- Also, **verse 13** closes with the expression, "the sun ... hastened not to go down about a whole day," where the word "hasted not" (*uz*) again speaks of motion, and the phrase "go down" (*labho*) is normal in reference to the sun setting.
- Still further, **verse 14** states that this day was unique in history, which suggests a major miracle such as the prolonging of a natural day occurred.

The extent of this prolongation can also be estimated. Since the hour was at noon when Joshua voiced the call, and it is stated that the sun did not go down for "about a full day," it is likely that the afternoon hours until sunset were prolonged twice their normal length. In other

It was at this stage that the manna ceased and God's people began to eat of the rich produce of the land of Canaan (**Joshua 5:12**). This special provision of manna had not failed through all the years in the wilderness: with Israel's arrival in Canaan, it was no longer needed.

NO CIRCUMCISION IN THE WILDERNESS

There had been no circumcision in the wilderness for those who had been born on the march because the covenant was 'in suspension' for 40 years as a result of the people's disbelief and disobedience (**Numbers 14**). Now, at Gilgal, the practice of circumcision is resumed with the new generation, marking the renewal of the old relationship between God and His people. Gilgal highlights a spiritual truth: those who are living to the flesh and walking according to the world never experience a "circumcision of the heart and in the spirit" (**Romans 2:29**); they never experience a cleansing "from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit" (**2 Corinthians 7:1**); there is never a "laying aside of ... the sin that doth so easily beset them" (**Hebrews 12:1**). But they are commanded to. They must learn the significance of Gilgal. Not until we have recognised and acted upon the truth of our death to self and the flesh in the person of Christ, can we appreciate the value of His cross and the power of His risen life.

2. JERICHO: A CRUCIAL CONQUEST OF A CITY (Joshua 6)



The city of Jericho, a small oasis on the west side of the Jordan River near the Dead Sea, is not only the eastern gateway to the Promised Land, but it is also a fortified city and poses a threat to the welfare of Israel.

Joshua is a brilliant military strategist, so much so that his campaigns in the Bible are still studied in the Army War College today. As he stands overlooking the city, contemplating how to conquer it, the angel of the Lord appears to him and instructs him to march around the city once a day for seven days. On the seventh day, he is to march around it seven times and the people are to shout. The city wall will fall down. They did, and it did ... a miraculous conquest of a city!

A CAPTAIN FOR THE CONQUEST ... THE VISION OF THE LORD

When Joshua proceeded to survey Jericho, he met a stranger with a drawn sword in his hand. The leader of the Israelites was anxious to determine whether this stranger was for or against Israel. Amazingly, that stranger identified himself as "Captain of the Lord's host" (**Joshua 5:14**). At the sound of this statement, Joshua fell on his face. **It is obvious that this is one instance of a Theophany (or Christophany): God manifesting Himself in the Old Testament.** It contains echoes of the burning bush (cf. **Exodus 3**). It was an unforgettable experience! In effect, the Lord confronted Joshua with the thought: "I am on my own side; whose side are you on?"!

WAS JESUS THE CAPTAIN?

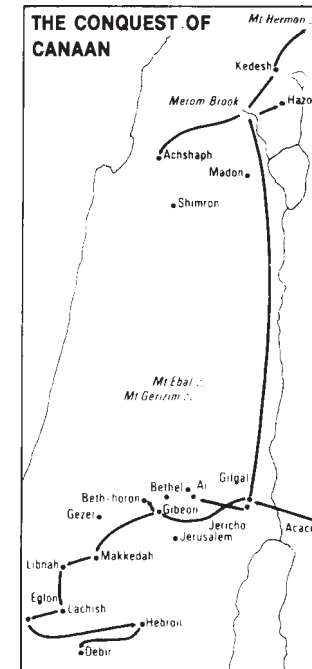
Reasons why this figure was none other than the Son of God, the Eternal Word, are listed by George Bush in his commentary on the Book of Joshua:

- (1) The title which he here gives himself, 'Captain of the host of the Lord,' which is but another form of the name 'Lord of hosts,' implying the ruler of all the heavenly hosts, and which is evidently the appropriate title of Jehovah-Jesus.
- (2) His acceptance of the worship or adoration which Joshua here pays him. This an angel or any created being would undoubtedly have refused. (cf. **Revelation 19:10; 22:9; Judges 13:16**). Here, however, instead of reproving Joshua for doing him too much honour, he commands him to do still more by 'loosing his shoes from off his feet;' thus insisting upon the highest acknowledgment of the Divine presence which was in use among the eastern nations.
- (3) From the place being made holy by his presence (**Joshua 5:15**), which was the special prerogative of God (cf. Moses at burning bush, **Exod. 3:5**);
- (4) From his being expressly called 'Jehovah,' (**6:2**), which passage undoubtedly forms a part of the present narrative, as otherwise he must have appeared without any ostensible object, neither delivering any message, making any promise, nor uttering any command, except merely that Joshua should loose his shoes from his feet.

Having met with the Lord, Christ, Joshua is now a man fully equipped for his task. He has witnessed the Lord at work in the drying of the Red Sea and the Jordan River: God had not changed over the space of those 40 years. He had the personal assurance from the Lord that his path would lead to success; that his way would be prosperous. He is now spiritually prepared for the conquest of Canaan.

If someone had been able to step forward and speak to Joshua when he was confronted by the wily Gibeonites and warn him, "Be careful, Joshua. What you do today will have fatal consequences for the children of Israel 400 years from now," we may be sure he would have acted differently. **More to the point: had Joshua sought the counsel of the Lord that day, he would have acted differently!**

Further embarrassment was to follow for Joshua. **Joshua 10 informs us that God's servant was forced to rise up in the defence of the Gibeonites - a people he should have destroyed!** When news of the treaty Gibeon had made reached the king of Jerusalem, he formed a coalition of major southern cities to fight against Gibeon and destroy it (four leading cities joined with him: Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon. All five cities have been located). What an ironic position: the enemy determined to do what the children of the Lord should have done! By this means, Joshua was compelled to fight on the side of, and for the lives of, those who had deceived him! The lesson should not be lost on us. We must consider the consequences of our actions - and understand that we do not sin alone!

2. THE SOUTHERN CAMPAIGN: Joshua 10.

Joshua brought his troops by forced march the 24-mile distance to Gibeon in one night. He took the attackers by surprise, routed, and pursued them toward the heights near Beth-horon.

Near Beth-horon the fleeing troops turned south in an apparent attempt to reach home cities, but on the way God sent a hailstorm that killed more of the enemy than did Israel's swords.

The battle of Beth-horon is the outstanding feature of this southern campaign - "one of the most important in the history of the world" according to Dean Stanley.

Following the defeat of the Central confederacy, Joshua is victorious over the entire south.

lived in one of the cities "afar off." They 'doctored' their appearance to suggest that they had travelled for weeks, if not months (**Joshua 9:4-6**). Though Joshua's suspicions are raised, the appearance and announcements of the people woo him, and he 'buys' their lies (**Joshua 9:8-13**). He made a covenant of peace with the Gibeonites to let them live. Within 3 days, however, the truth came out. The children of Israel set out, on the third day, to pursue the central part of their campaign in the land of Canaan and they discovered that one of the cities in the central part of the land was the city of ... Gibeon! However, **Joshua 9:16-21** reveals that while Israel discovered who these strangers were, because of the covenant they had already entered into with them, they were powerless to smite them. The best they could do was to suppress them, keeping them in perpetual service as "hewers of wood and drawers of water."

PRAYERLESSNESS!

Joshua 9:14 underlines the real reason why Israel rose up in sympathy with the Gibeonites, unable to uncover the disguise and deceit of these men: they relied on their own judgment and did not consult the Lord! They "took of their victuals, and **asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord.**" This is the first indication of direct disobedience on the part of Joshua from the commandment given in **Numbers 27:21**.

THE 'LAW OF THE HARVEST'

A very important consideration comes to the surface at this juncture - and continually appears throughout the Old Testament. **Commitments which are made in one time period which are against the will of God and are a direct result of not consulting with God always result in a later penalty which must be paid, either by that individual, or by individuals in a later generation. It is the scriptural principle of the harvest - of sowing and reaping.** It is worth noting that the reaping is customarily of a greater magnitude than the sowing (cf. **Hosea 8:7; Galatians 6:7**).

This reaping may be done by the children of those who committed the original offence - or it may travel through a number of generations before the penalty is paid. The treaty with the Gibeonites, made in the energy of the flesh, without consultation with God and out of the seed-bed of an overly confident people, was honoured by the Lord ... yet, over 400 years later, innocent people paid the heavy price for the covenant made in **Joshua 9. 2 Samuel 21:1-9** provides the details. The thought of seven innocent men hanging as a result of what Saul did in breaking a treaty that was made outside of the will of God almost 400 years ago is heartbreaking. They were called to reap what someone else sowed four centuries ago!

A CHARTER FOR THE CONQUEST ... THE 'MILITARY MANUAL' FOR THE INVASION OF CANAAN



Deuteronomy 20 outlines 'the military manual' for the occupation of Canaan. **Deuteronomy 20:15** puts cities for conquest into 2 classes: "The cities which are very far off from thee," and "the cities of these nations."

i. **"These nations" is a clear reference to the people that God had specifically told the Israelites to exterminate; Deuteronomy 20:16&17:** "But of the cities of these people, which the LORD thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth: 17 But thou shalt utterly destroy them; namely, the Hittites,

and the Amorites, the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee."

The reason for this extreme action is provided in **Deuteronomy 20:18:** "That they teach you not to do after all their abominations, which they have done unto their gods; so should ye sin against the LORD your God." This decisive action was to prevent idolatry and immorality spreading among the people of Israel (cf. **Deuteronomy 23:17&18**).

ii. **In addition to these people in the cities of Canaan, were "cities afar off."** These were cities located around the periphery of the land of Canaan. They were not specifically designated for destruction. **Verses 10-14** detail instructions concerning these cities which were "afar off." The Israelites were to offer peace: if that offer was accepted, the inhabitants of that place would become servants to Israel; if the offer of peace was refused, Israel was obliged to slay the army and take the spoil of that city for themselves.

THE FALL OF JERICHO

The children of Israel are ready for battle. Yet, due to the fact that the battle against the Canaanites was essentially God's holy war, the Lord chooses to demonstrate to the people that He did not need them to conquer the land. Rather than send them out in military formation, He determined that the great bastion of Canaanite strength - the city of Jericho - would fall without the deployment of their military muscle. It was therefore intended to be a symbolic victory.

Prior to the defeat of Jericho, specific information was given by the Lord with regard to the spoil within that city. God claimed all of the

booty as His as the sole victor in the battle against Jericho; **Joshua 6:17-19**. The word “accursed” is the Hebrew term ‘herem’: it means “sanctified” or “consecrated.” (Some have rendered it, “under the ban”). The spoil was set apart unto the Lord; therefore none could touch what belonged to Him. Tragically, Achan did ... with the most horrendous consequences (**Joshua 7**).

God instructed Israel to march round Jericho once a day for six days; then march round it on the seventh day seven times. They were to be totally silent. (**Joshua 6:3-5&10**). (This would have demanded considerable restraint, assuming that the inhabitants of Jericho must have looked on this vast procession every morning as one of the rarest sights known to man). However, on the seventh day, after they had compassed the city seven times, blew the trumpets and shouted with a great shout, the wall fell flat, enabling Joshua's forces to take the city (**cf. Joshua 6:20&21**).

Instead of a 2-3 year siege (which would have been necessary to take the city under normal circumstances), the victory was immediate. This symbolic victory was designed to teach the children of Israel that no matter how strong the fortifications of the cities in the land of Canaan were, God was able to overcome them in a moment. What was impossible to men was gloriously possible with Him! The children of Israel careered into the city and followed the instructions of the Lord. Amid the general turmoil, the reminder was given that Rahab's family should be spared (**Joshua 6:22&23**).

On the surface, matters could not be more satisfying. Victory over a formidable enemy stronghold has been experienced; the promise - and power - of the Lord has been confirmed; the people of Israel are so buoyed up with confidence that they feel they can conquer the entirety of the land. What they were not prepared for was the dismal revelation of Achan's sin detailed in **Joshua 7**!

3. CONQUEST: THE SYSTEMATIC DEFEAT OF CANAAN (Joshua 7-12)

The Canaanites are united in their hatred of the Israelites, but not in their military opposition to them. Though Egypt was nominally in control of the region, in reality there was no central government.

Canaan was a land of city-states; each city (and surrounding countryside) had its own king. To conquer the land each city would have to be defeated.

Joshua cuts through the mid-section toward the Mediterranean Sea. Having divided the land, he then begins to conquer, from South to North. In about seven years the initial defeat of Canaan is complete.

The conquest of the land of Canaan was carried out according to a well-defined plan. Joshua led the Israelites on **three military campaigns**.

1. THE CENTRAL CAMPAIGN: **Joshua 6-9:27**.

In this campaign, cities and towns at the heart of the land were attacked: by this wedge-like movement the powers of the north were cut off from those of the south. Every turn and engagement of the army is full of spiritual significance - and the progress of the story sets forth many valuable lessons regarding the great conflict in which the Christian is engaged. For example:

- the capture of Jericho reveals the secret of victory - it was dependent on the intervention of the Lord (**Joshua 6** cf. **2 Corinthians 10:4**);
- the defeat at Ai speaks of the danger of self-confidence;
- the ultimate overthrow of Ai points to the unfailing power of obedience. Achan's sin left Israel impotent when they attempted to defeat Ai (**Joshua 7**); only when that sin was comprehensively dealt with were Israel able to go forward with the remainder of the conquest of the land (**Joshua 8**);
- the deception of the Gibeonites warns against prayerlessness, which inevitably leads to compromises.

THE DECEIT OF THE GIBEONITES

Gibeon was located quite close to the camp of the Israelites. They did not qualify for the description, “cities very far off.” **They were one of those cities designated for total annihilation, as they were in the area of immediate occupation.** However, when we consider the craftiness of the Gibeonites, the conclusion may be drawn that somehow they had obtained details of the military manual which had been given to Joshua. **Joshua 9:3&4** reveals: “And when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done unto Jericho and to Ai, They did work wilyly” The word “wilyly” used in **Joshua 9:4** is the same word that was used in **Genesis 3:1** to describe the character of the serpent - “subtil.” They pretended to Joshua that they