

Placing Joshua in TIME

When studying any segment of history, such as we will be doing in the book of Joshua, it is always beneficial to get an overall view of the history of which that segment was a part. Joshua was a part of Old Testament History, so in the beginning of this study let us first memorize the various periods comprising Old Testament History in order.

PERIODS OF OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY

1. Old World.
2. Post-Flood.
3. Patriarchal.
4. Bondage.
5. Wanderings.
6. Conquest.
7. Judges.
8. United Kingdom.
9. Divided Kingdom.
10. Exile.
11. Post-Exile.

BRIEF ANALYSIS OF EACH PERIOD

1. Old World period--It began with Creation and ended with the flood of Noah's day. It comprised ten long generations. The early chapters of Genesis tell us of this period.
2. Post-Flood--It is thought to have covered around 400 years. It was a rebuilding period when the three sons of Noah began repopulating the depleted earth. It ran from the flood to the time of Abraham. It was during this period that the Tower of Babel was undertaken, resulting in the scattering of the human family into various nations. It was also during this period that idolatry probably began.

3. Patriarchal period--It was a four-generation period: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Jacob's 12 sons. In its last generation Joseph was sold into Egypt by his spiteful brothers, which in time led to their offsprings' bondage in Egypt.

4. Bondage period--Jacob and his offspring remained in the rich delta section of Egypt after the drought years were over where they multiplied into a great people, causing them to be put into bondage by a new reigning regime. As the long years passed, that bondage became more and more oppressive, causing God to raise up Moses to lead them out.

5. Wanderings period--Through the leadership of Moses, God delivered His people (the Israelites) from Egypt and started them toward Canaan, the land He had promised them. But their sins (especially their unbelief) caused Him to condemn that adult generation to live the rest of its time wandering in the desert country between Egypt and Canaan. These were the years of Moses' leadership.

6. Conquest period--After Moses died, the mantle of leadership fell on Joshua, who led them into the land of Canaan and then in its conquest.

7. Judges period--Following the death of the aged Joshua each tribe was supposed to rid its territory of its idolatrous inhabitants as well as every vestige of their religion. But they conquered enough to subdue the inhabitants and put them to tribute instead of doing what God had told them. As a result their idolatry got into Israel, causing God to deliver them into the hands of various invading nations. When Israel did repent, God raised up Judges to deliver them out of its enemies' hands.

8. United Kingdom period--Samuel was the last of the Judges. In his day Israel demanded a king to be like the nations around them. God directed Samuel to anoint the first two kings (Saul and David). Both reigned 40 years each as did David's son Solomon. But because Solomon became idolatrous through some of the pagan women he married, God told him He was going to divide his kingdom. Thus from the kingdom's united years we give this period its name.

9. Divided Kingdom period--After Solomon's death the kingdom did divide. Solomon's descendants had only two of the original 12 tribes to rule, and that portion of the kingdom was called Judah while the other ten tribes in the north retained the name Israel. Because of idolatry in the northern kingdom it was destroyed and taken captive by Assyria.

10. Exile period--In time Judah also was taken into captivity by Babylon. Daniel and his friends (Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego) lived in this period.

11. Post-Exile period--The seed of Abraham (the Messiah) was to be born of the house of David of the tribe of Judah, so God ultimately brought Judah back into its own land around 500 years before Christ. This period brought an end to Old Testament History.

WHERE JOSHUA FITS INTO OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY

As you can see from the above, he was the successor of Moses and the leader of the Conquest period. The 24 chapters of the book that bears his name tell us of that conquest and then of the division of the land to the various tribes.

QUIZ

1. Name the 11 periods of Old Testament History in order.
2. Give at least one item of information about each of the 11 periods.
3. Where did Joshua fit into Old Testament History?

The New Leader

Before we consider Joshua in his leadership role (that is what the book of Josh. covers), let us consider some background information.

JOSHUA'S EARLY LIFE

1. Obviously he was born in Egyptian bondage. His younger years were spent in the bitterest times of that bondage, years described in Exo. 2:23-25: "The children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob...and God had respect unto them."

2. And obviously Joshua was a part of Israel's exciting departure from Egypt--through the Red Sea.

3. He was commander of the Israelite army in its battle with the attacking Amalekites soon after they escaped Egypt (Exo. 17:8-13). This fact shows Joshua was full-grown at the time of the Exodus--also that he was a strong, brave man.

4. Next we see him as Moses' servant on Mt. Sinai at the time Moses was given the Ten Commandments and the rest of the law (Exo. 24:12,13). At the end of the 40 days when they were coming down and heard the noise of the idolatrous calf-worshippers, he and Moses had different ideas as to what the noise represented (Exo. 32:15-20).

5. Israel's murmuring was very early too much for Moses to bear, so God told him He would give him 70 elders to help him. When two of those were prophesying among the people of the camp, Joshua was envious and said, "My lord Moses, forbid, them." But Moses said, "Envious thou for my sake? would God that all the Lord's people were prophets" (Num. 11:4-29).

6. He was one of the 12 spies Moses dispatched to view the land where they were going and then report on it. Only he and Caleb

proved to be men of faith to believe God could overcome the walled cities and the giants they saw. For this they were promised entrance into that land when that generation that accepted the unfaithful spies' view was condemned (Num. 14:29,30).

These were some of the earlier experiences of Joshua.

CHOSEN TO SUCCEED MOSES

When God told Moses to go up into the mountain and view the land before he died, Moses wanted God to set a new leader over the people (Num. 27:15-17). God gave instructions as to what he was to do to his successor Joshua (Num. 27:18-21). So Moses set Joshua before the high priest Eleazar and all the people and laid his hands on him, thus publicly inaugurating him as the new leader (Num. 27:22,23). Moses urged Joshua to be strong and courageous because God would be with him to lead Israel into the land He had promised them (Deut. 31:7,8).

AFTER MOSES' DEATH

1. The last chapter of Deut. tells of Moses' death (34:1-8), and the first chapter of Joshua has God saying to Joshua, "Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them" (Josh. 1:2).

2. He assured Joshua of complete victory over the inhabitants of that land because He would be with him as He had been with Moses (Josh. 1:3-5), whereupon He urged Joshua to be strong, courageous, and obedient to all that was written in the law of Moses (Josh. 1:6,7).

EARLY MOVES AS LEADER

1. Joshua sent a message to the people through his officers that in only three days they would be crossing into the promised land, so

food should be prepared for those days (Josh. 1:10,11).

2. He then called on the two and a half tribes whose inheritance was east of the Jordan to fulfill the promise they had made to Moses--to go with their brethren across Jordan and fight with them until victory was theirs (Josh. 1:12-15). They told Joshua they were ready to do what they had promised (Josh. 1:16-18).

OBSERVATIONS

1. Joshua and Caleb had stood for God even when their peers had not. Sometimes we too must do the same. May we be like Joshua and Caleb.

2. They had affirmed that God was able to give them the land and victory over the walled cities and the giants. They lived to have their boast of God come true. We too should believe that whatever God has promised, He will also perform.

3. God's instructions to Joshua to be strong, courageous, and obedient to His Word are equally applicable to God's leaders today.

QUIZ

1. In what condition did Israel exist in Joshua's growing-up years?
2. What shows Joshua was full-grown when Israel left Egypt?
3. What unusual 40-day experience did he along with Moses have?
4. What did Joshua think the noise at the foot of Mt. Sinai was?
5. How was his and Caleb's report different from the other spies' report?
6. What special reward were they promised because of their report?
7. On what occasion was he envious for Moses?

8. Did Moses get to know that Joshua would be his successor before he died?
9. Of what did God assure Joshua upon his becoming Moses' successor?
10. What was one of God's instructions to him at that time?
11. What message did Joshua send to the people?
12. What did Joshua call on the two and a half tribes to do?

Two Spies' Risky Venture

Israel was camped in the Jordan Valley just east of the river. They were eager to enter the land and begin its conquest that it might soon be their homeland.

SENT TO SPY OUT JERICO

1. Jericho was a great city only a short distance west of the Jordan River which flowed between it and the Israelites' encampment in the plains of Moab.
2. Since it was located near the usual place of crossing that river via a ford, it was to be the first city attacked by Israel. So Joshua dispatched two spies to look it over and bring him a report (Josh. 2:1).
3. It would be a risky venture on their part.

EXCITEMENT FOR THEM IN JERICO

1. Since they needed a lodging place, they chose Rahab's place (Josh. 2:1). She was referred to as a "harlot" which has given rise to much discussion whether she was a harlot in the usual sense of that word, or whether she was a religious harlot. A few have even thought she was just an inn-keeper. Your writer takes her to be a harlot in the usual meaning of that word, making it not unusual for her to receive travelers into her house. As spies they would have a more natural entrance to her house than into any other house.
2. Jericho was aware of the Israelites' presence on the other side of the river. Someone saw the two men enter Rahab's house and reported it to the king (each city had a "king" in those days). He rightfully figured they were on a spy-mission and demanded that Rahab deliver them up (Josh. 2:2,3).
3. When she hid them under flax she was drying on her flat rooftop, she told them why she was hiding them from the authorities: you have the right God--we have heard of His drying up the Red

Sea and of His delivering the two powerful kings east of the Jordan into your hand (Josh. 2:8-11), and she asked that her kindness to them be rewarded by their sparing her and her family in the coming battle (Josh. 2:12,13). They promised they would if her family members were in her house at the time, that she display in her window the cord with which she was going to lower them to safety, and that she tell nobody their plans (Josh. 2:14-20). Her faith is listed among that of the great believers in Heb. 11:31. See Jas. 2:25 also.

4. As she let them down by the cord (her house was built upon the wall, probably across the space between the double wall of the city), she sent them the opposite direction--to the mountain west of town instead of east to their encampment. This was likely the same mountain where Jesus later suffered His temptation after His baptism (Matt. 4:8,9). Of course, the Jericho authorities who sought them toward the river never found them.

5. Then after three days of hiding, the spies returned to Joshua. What a report they gave their leader (Josh. 2:23,24)!

OBSERVATIONS

1. Rahab's faith saved her. Have you ever thought that God had to spare her actual house when the walls came tumbling down?

2. We might wonder about her lying to the city authorities and also her unpatriotic behavior in hiding the spies. Let us not forget that we are on this side of Christ's coming, and that we have Christian standards which she did not have. God knew she would willingly become part of Israel later (consider Matt. 1:5). God took what she did as a manifestation of her faith in Him.

3. Contrast these spies' faith-report to the original spies' fear-report. Their faith was based on what God has done and had promised to do.

QUIZ

1. Where was Jericho located?
2. Why did Joshua send two men into Jericho?
3. Where did they stay in Jericho?
4. What did Rahab tell the authorities who came to get the men?
5. Where had she hid them?
6. What did she say to the men about Israel's God?
7. What request did she make of them?
8. On what conditions would her request be granted?
9. Where did she send them for their safety?
10. How long were they there before returning to Joshua?
11. What attitude of Jericho did they report to Joshua?

The Long-Awaited Day

Can you imagine the excitement that prevailed throughout the camp of Israel as a result of the spies' report?

JOSHUA MOVED ISRAEL TO THE RIVER

1. This move was in preparation for crossing into the land (Josh. 3:1).
2. This was probably why they were to prepare food ahead of time.

OFFICERS' INSTRUCTIONS TO THE PEOPLE

The officers told the people that when they saw the priests bearing the ark, they were to follow, but to leave a space of 2,000 cubits (3,000 feet) between it and themselves (Josh. 3:2-4).

FINAL MATTERS BEFORE THE CROSSING

1. Joshua called on the people to sanctify themselves ahead of what the Lord was about to do (Josh. 3:5). What were they to do in sanctifying themselves? Probably the same that Moses had Israel do when God was going to come down and speak to them at Mt. Sinai (see Exo. 19:10-15).
2. On the next day Joshua told the priests when to take up the ark and start for the Jordan (Josh. 3:6).
3. God assured Joshua that on that very day, He would begin to magnify him before the people even as He had Moses (Josh. 3:7). He was also to instruct the priests carrying the ark to stop and stand in the very edge of the water of the river (Josh. 3:8).
4. By the miraculous crossing of the Jordan, Joshua told the people, they would be assured their great God was going to drive out the nations living in the land west of the river (Josh. 3:9-11).

They were also to select a man from each tribe for a purpose to be made known later (Josh. 3:12).

THE CROSSING ITSELF

1. At that time the Jordan was overflowing its banks, so its waters had spread out shallow throughout its wide valley--so the priests actually stood in very shallow water.

2. Suddenly the river stopped flowing and began backing up higher and higher to let the people go across the valley and the river channel to the other side--and they did so on miraculously dry land. While the several million Israelites crossed, the river had risen as far north as the city of Adam--look it up on an Old Testament map of Palestine (Josh. 3:14-17).

MEMORIAL TO THE CROSSING ERECTED

1. The 12 men previously chosen from the various tribes took 12 stones from where the priests had stood, carried them to the west side of the river channel, and built them into a monument so that in time to come when their offspring would ask what those meant, they would tell them of this great crossing (Josh. 4:1-8).

2. In turn they took 12 stones from the land and put them where they had gotten the 12 stones from the riverbed for the memorial (Josh. 4:9).

3. Then the priests were called up from where they had been standing, the crossing was complete, and the river began to flow once more (Josh. 4:16-18).

4. This memorable day was the tenth day of the first month (Josh. 4:19).

RESPONSE TO THIS MIRACLE

1. Rahab had told the spies of the fear already existing among them.

2. God stopping the Jordan to allow Israel to enter their land only

added to their dread and fear (Josh. 5:1).

OBSERVATIONS

1. Since the people were to maintain a distance between them and the ark they were following, God was teaching them the importance of having due respect for sacred things. This is still very important.
2. Stopping a flooding river without benefit of a dam was no problem for the powerful God. No work of power is too great for God to perform if it is His will to do so.
3. "What mean these stones?" concerning their monument would be very similar to our children asking, "What mean the elements of bread and grape juice?" in the Lord's supper.

QUIZ

1. How much space were the people to leave between themselves and the ark?
2. What condition was the Jordan in at that time?
3. As far upstream as what city did the Jordan rise while Israel crossed?
4. How many stones were used in the memorial to the crossing?
5. Where did they get those stones?
6. How did Jericho feel about this miracle?

Encamped at Gilgal

In the valley west of the Jordan River there was an abundance of flat land for Israel's several-year encampment. And it was not too far from Jericho ("two miles"--Josephus) which they would soon attack. Several things transpired here prior to the attack on Jericho.

MASS CIRCUMCISION

1. Before we discuss this, it is important that you read the account in Josh. 5:2-9.
2. Those born during the many-year Wanderings period had not been circumcised. They now were. For no family in Israel to continue the ancient rite of circumcision during that long period seems strange, suggesting that God may have purposely suspended this sign of the covenant between Him and Israel until the new generation came into the promised land--as if He disowned the unbelieving, disobedient generation described in Heb. 3:10.
3. Because of this mass circumcision the place of encampment came to be called "Gilgal", which means "rolling"--God said, "This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you."
4. It was good that nearby Jericho knew nothing of this mass surgery, or it would have immediately attacked the camp of crippled Israelites.

FIRST PASSOVER IN THE NEW LAND

1. Israel's crossing the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month was only a few days before the annual Passover feast.
2. Israel's observing this Passover (reported in Josh. 5:10) must have had special meaning now that they were no longer grounded in the desert but were in their own land. This may be why God reported it in the book of Josh.

THE DAILY MANNA CEASED

1. Each day of their wilderness wanderings (except the weekly Sabbaths) God had sent manna for the Israelites to gather and use.
2. Now that they were in the land promised them, they have evidently come into possession of some of the inhabitants' stored grain, so God would no longer supply them with His manna. God said in Deut. 6:10 that when He would bring them into the land, He would give them things they had not worked to produce--this was beginning to come to pass.
3. From this time forward, Israel would have to overcome those living in the land or starve.

ANGELIC CAPTAIN OF THE LORD'S HOST

1. When Joshua saw a personage with a drawn sword, he boldly went to him to ask him who he was. He wanted to know if he was for them or against them (Josh. 5:13). From his answer we take him to be an angel sent to direct the conquering soon to begin (Josh. 5:14).
2. Such an identification caused Joshua to fall on his face before him (Josh. 5:14) and remove the shoe from his foot (Josh. 5:15).
3. This was a special divine encouragement given Joshua on the verge of the conquest's beginning.

OBSERVATIONS

1. Old Testament circumcision severed a small piece of unnecessary flesh, but New Testament circumcision puts off the whole body of sin from us (Col. 2:11). All Christians have received this important spiritual circumcision (Phil. 3:3).
2. Jesus is our manna ("living bread") who came down from heaven (John 6:48-51) on which we feed daily between our Red Sea (baptism) and our Jordan (death).
3. The assurance brought to Joshua and Israel by the angel's appearance and promise give us meaning concerning Jesus'

promise in Matt. 28:20 to be with us in our evangelistic conquests.

QUIZ

1. Why was "Gilgal" given that name?
2. What feast did Israel observe soon after entering the land?
3. What caused God to suspend the manna after they were in the promised land?
4. Who was the person with the drawn sword?

The Conquest Begins

Walls were built around ancient cities to protect them from invading armies. Jericho's gates were shut for fear of the Israelites (Josh 6:1). It was not because Israel itself was so great but because of what God had done in their behalf that the inhabitants of the land were filled with fright. The mistake of the unfaithful spies years ago was that they saw the powerful enemies but eliminated God from their considerations. Listen to them: "We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we...All the people that we saw...are men of a great stature. And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak...and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight" (Num. 13:31-33).

DIVINE ASSURANCE THAT ISRAEL WOULD CONQUER JERICHO

Even Jericho holding up within its fortified walls rather than going out to attack encamping Israel was indicative that Israel would overcome, and God so promised (Josh. 6:2).

INSTRUCTIONS GIVEN AND OBEYED

1. For six consecutive days the fighting men of Israel were to walk around Jericho once daily. Following them would be seven priests blowing on rams' horn trumpets, and following the priests would be the ark of the covenant being carried (Josh. 6:3-6). From verse seven it seems the people then followed the ark but silently (verse 10). Each night they returned to the camp (verses, 11,12).
2. What a fearful sight that was to Jericho, and how fearful to hear the blaring! But when nothing happened during the first day, Jericho might have wondered if Israel had changed its mind. But they came again the second day and did the same thing--but still no fighting occurred. "What is going on?" Jericho might have

wondered.

3. Then came the seventh day, and the group just kept circling the city (seven times) after which the signal was given, the priests blasted on the trumpets, the people shouted, and Jericho's ancient walls collapsed--except that part with Rahab's house--allowing the Israelites to enter the city from all directions (Josh. 6:13-21).

4. Rahab and her family were brought out to safety (Josh. 6:22,23,25).

5. They collected the silver and gold and vessels of brass and iron found in the ruins and put them in the treasury of the Lord according to divine commandment (Josh. 6:19). Joshua then burned the destroyed city (Josh. 6:24).

THE CITY NOT TO BE REBUILT

1. Joshua pronounced a double curse on anyone who would dare rebuild Jericho: in the beginning of the project ("lay the foundation"), his firstborn would die, and when he completed the project ("set up the gates"), his youngest would die.

2. For centuries nobody undertook to rebuild Jericho--maybe because this curse was known. But in the wicked days of King Ahab's reign a man from idolatrous Bethel (Hiel by name) undertook the project, and both parts of the curse fell upon his family (I Kings 16:34).

OBSERVATIONS

1. Life will have many "giants" that will make us feel like "grasshoppers" if we do not take God into consideration.

2. The instructions for conquering Jericho had to be precisely obeyed before the walls would come down just as we must be obedient today if we expect God to bless us (I John 3:22).

3. Some critics of the Bible used to say it would have been impossible to walk around a city seven times in a day. That was before the days of archaeology. Jericho was a compact city with

its large population living in a city that covered only seven acres--no problem to walk around seven times the same day.

4. All of Jericho's spoils belonged to God because He said so. He would let the people have the spoils of later cities conquered. According to a divine pattern, God is always first (see Prov. 3:9 and Matt. 6:33).

5. It seems there will always be a "Hiel" who will try out God to see if He really means what He says. It is better to revere than test God.

6. Simply because it had been many years since God pronounced this curse did not nullify the promised curse. What the Bible says about Jesus' going to judge the world will likewise come to pass even though God spoke of it many centuries ago.

QUIZ

1. How was Jericho's attitude different from what the ten spies had seen it?
2. What accounts for this difference?
3. What was the order of the following groups in the marches around Jericho--the ark, the soldiers, the people, and the priests with the trumpets?
4. How many times per day were they to encircle the city for the first six days?
5. How many times were they to encircle it the seventh day?
6. What were they to do with the spoils of the city?
7. Who only were spared of the inhabitants of Jericho?
8. What did Joshua do to the destroyed city?
9. What curse did he pronounce?
10. Who had the curse fall upon him?

Reverse, Then Victory, at Ai

Achan of the tribe of Judah succumbed to temptation during the battle of Jericho and took some choice spoils contrary to the explicit command of God (Josh. 7:1). His act is the background for the material in chapters seven and eight of Joshua.

AI TO BE NEXT

1. After the fall of Jericho the city Ai to its west was to be the next attacked. It was on the ridge highway running north and south on the backbone of the land.
2. Joshua again sent spies to look Ai over (Josh. 7:2). They reported that not all the army was needed--only a few (Josh. 7:3). The full army numbered 601,730 (Num. 26:51), so when Joshua sent only around 3,000 (Josh. 7:4), it was surely a very small part of the army.

THE BATTLE WAS WON BY AI

1. Talk about a surprise--Ai won (Josh. 7:4). Israel even lost 36 men in the battle (verse 5).
2. Joshua could not understand it since God had promised to be with them. Distraught and confused he and the elders of Israel prostrated themselves before the Lord at the ark of the covenant (Josh. 7:6-9).
3. God told him someone in Israel had taken of Jericho's spoils, and He would not be with them until the matter was dealt with (Josh. 7:10-12).
4. The next day was devoted to finding the culprit. The whole encampment stood in tribes--God showed the transgressor was in Judah (Josh. 7:13-16). Then he was in the Zarhite element of Judah of the household of Carmi. Achan (son of Carmi) was the man. (He held out without giving himself up, probably realizing

what would happen to the guilty person.)

5. Joshua demanded of him what he had done (Josh. 7:19). He had taken a Babylonish garment, 200 shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold, and they were hidden under the floor of his tent (Josh. 7:20-22).

6. For this, Achan and all his family and possessions were stoned, burned, and buried under a large pile of stones, probably as a testimony to what he had done and what God had ordered done to him as punishment (Josh. 7:24-26).

GOD PROMISED VICTORY OVER AI

1. Since the Achan sin had been taken care of, God promised to be with Israel in its renewed attack on Ai.

2. He also gave instructions as to how they were to attack. An ambushment of soldiers was to be secretly placed in hiding beyond the city, Joshua and the army were to approach the city to fight, and when they feigned a retreat to draw the men of Ai away from the city, the ambushment was to enter the city and set it on fire which would cause the men of Ai to turn back to their burning city only to find themselves trapped between two sets of Israelite soldiers (Josh. 8:3-9).

3. The plan worked perfectly, Israel was victorious, and they were rewarded with the spoils (Josh. 8:9-29).

OBSERVATIONS

1. From Ai at first defeating Israel, we see that when God wills that a person or a people be chastened, He can bring it to pass through what we might consider small means.

2. When things are going wrong, do as Joshua did--ascertain why.

3. Some people will delay their guilt being figured out as long as possible. Leaders, expect this.

4. Achan presents a typical case in the progression of evil. At first he "saw", then he "coveted", then he "took", and then he "hid"

what he had done.

5. God's being with Israel against Ai did not rule out utilizing military strategy.

QUIZ

1. What promise did God make concerning the second battle with Ai?
2. What was the battle plan?
3. Did any escape from Ai?
4. What did Joshua do with the king of Ai?

Happenings at Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim

When Mt. Ebal is mentioned in Josh. 8:30, we know where Israel was located. Mt. Ebal was in the center of the land near the ancient city Shechem and across the valley from its twin mountain, Mt. Gerizim.

MOSES' PREVIOUS INSTRUCTIONS

1. Moses spoke to the people about a blessing for obedience and a curse for disobedience (Deut. 11:27,28).
2. Looking ahead to the time when Israel would enter the promise land, Moses spoke of "the blessing upon mount Gerizim" and "the curse upon mount Ebal" (Deut. 11:29).
3. Later in Deut. (chapter 27) he told them that when they entered the land, they were to set up stones, plaster them so they could write the words of the law on the plaster, and build an altar of whole stones upon which they could offer sacrifices (verses 2-8). Then when the curses for disobedience found in verses 14-26 and 28:15-68 were read, the six tribes of Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali standing on Mt. Ebal would say, "Amen," and when the blessings found in 28:1-13 were read the six tribes of Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin standing on Mt. Gerizim would say, "Amen."

JOSHUA AND ISRAEL DID AS MOSES SAID

The Deut. material helps us understand Josh. 8:30-35. Joshua did build an altar on Mt. Ebal, it was built of whole stones, and they did offer sacrifices on it. They did plaster stones and there record the law of Moses. Half of the tribes did go up on Mt. Gerizim and half on Mt. Ebal, and as Joshua read the blessings and the curses, they added their "amens". Joshua went on to read all

the rest of the law also to the whole assembly.

THE GOOD ACOUSTICS

1. How could Joshua read without the aid of a public address system and be heard by so many people on the two adjacent mountains? In 1879 J. W. McGarvey made a special trip to the Holy Land for the purpose of writing the book, "Lands of the Bible," and here is his comment on page 287 of that book: "If it were possible, under any circumstances, for one man to read so as to be heard by such a multitude, this is the very place in which to do it. A number of travelers have tried the experiment of speaking to one another from mountain to mountain, and have succeeded with ease. The author tried the experiment of standing in the middle of the valley, with one of his companions half way up Mount Gerizim, and the other half way up Mount Ebal, and reading to them the curses in the 27th chapter of Deut. He was heard distinctly by the one on Mount Gerizim and indistinctly by the one on Mount Ebal, the thick grove of trees to the eastward obstructing the passage of sound in that direction. If, therefore, the people could have stood in this vast double amphitheater, which seems altogether probable, Joshua could have read to them without aid so that all could hear."

2. This probably accounts for why Joshua later used this place for his farewell address to the nation (Josh. 24:1ff) and why Rehoboam went there for his coronation (I Kings 12:1).

OBSERVATIONS

1. God still offers both blessings and curses--depending on what we sow, for He has said we shall reap what we have sown (Gal. 6:7,8).

2. Later Pharaohs were entombed in the dry mountains west of the Nile River rather than in pyramids as earlier Pharaohs were. The hallway leading to the tomb chamber deep within the mountain

was plastered, and while the plaster was yet damp and pliable, writing was made in it that was later touched with paint for reading purposes. When Joshua set up stones, plastered, and recorded the law, it was what he had known about back in Egypt. No, this record of the Law is not yet standing in Israel. Conquering enemies would have destroyed this religious item even as they did their temple.

3. When the Samaritan woman at Jacob's Well said, "Our fathers worshiped in this mountain," she was referring to Mt. Gerizim, the Samaritan sacred mountain near Jacob's Well (John 4:20).

QUIZ

1. Near what ancient city were Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim?
2. Moses foresaw their coming to this area and said they were to build an _____ of whole stones, were to write the _____ on plastered stones, and the law was to be _____ to the people at that place. As the blessings for obedience were read, half of the tribes on Mt. _____ were to say, "Amen."
3. Joshua and Israel did or did not carry out these instructions?
4. What did McGarvey find about the acoustics of that place?