

Challenge 2014: Bible in a Year

Week 10: Joshua 18 — Judges 17 (March 2 — 8)

Summary:

Sometimes the allotment of the land can seem somewhat tedious to read through, especially if you don't have a good map of the geography of where all of these dividing lines are being made. At the same time, remember that on these lines territorial boundaries are being made that will stand for generations. In addition, recognizing that the inheritance in the land is God's gift to the people and the generations that follow, it should not surprise us to see so much language dedicated to speaking of this event. So, as you begin with Joshua 18, don't be discouraged, press on, this is of value.

After the final allotment of land was portioned out and Joshua too was given an allotment, the cities of refuge were established and commanded to the people. These cities, of course, were meant as a place of sanctuary to which a murderer may flee from the avenger of blood. The presence of these cities is a reminder that even in the midst of law (and punishment) there is grace. While not given a territory of their own, the priests are allotted cities within each of the tribal territories, giving them a place to stay and fields to use to provide for their families. At the end of Chapter 21 we have the summary as to why all of this information about allotments is important: God is being faithful to fulfill his promises.

We move from that to a misunderstanding that very nearly created a civil war. Those tribes that settled to the east of the River Jordan feared that they might be forgotten in the worship of God in the generations that followed. Thus they built a copy of the altar of God on the east of the Jordan as a testimony to their union with the people of God. Yet those who lived to the west of the Jordan took this as an act of pagan worship and a rejection of the one and only true God. Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, was the emissary that sorted this confusion out, keeping the people united.

The Bible often skips over long periods of time that do not have any specific significance in redemptive history and that is exactly what we find taking place as we arrive in Joshua 23. Scholars debate the length of this "long time" but noting that Joshua was 110 at his death, it is estimated that about 20 years likely has passed since the land was divided to the point where Joshua calls the people together to remind them of the covenant.

The "choose this day whom you will serve" speech of Joshua is one we are all likely familiar with, but remember, this is a covenant renewal ceremony. Joshua is basically saying, "will you be in the covenant or out of it?" There was no option to remain in the land and still worship idols. If you were going to serve any other than the God of Israel, you were considered an enemy to God and would be put out of the land or killed. The blessings of this land belonged to God's own and God's own do not serve idols — or at least are not supposed to.

Judges:

What we find when we move to the book of Judges is that there is a little bit of overlap between the two books as both books records the death of Joshua. Judges begins with a brief summary of the conquest, largely focused on the failures of the Israelites to drive the Canaanites out of the land...something that sets the stage for the era of Judges to follow. Thus, we begin with the failures of Benjamin, Manasseh, Ephraim, Zebulun, Asher, Naphtali, and Dan... a rough start, indeed....

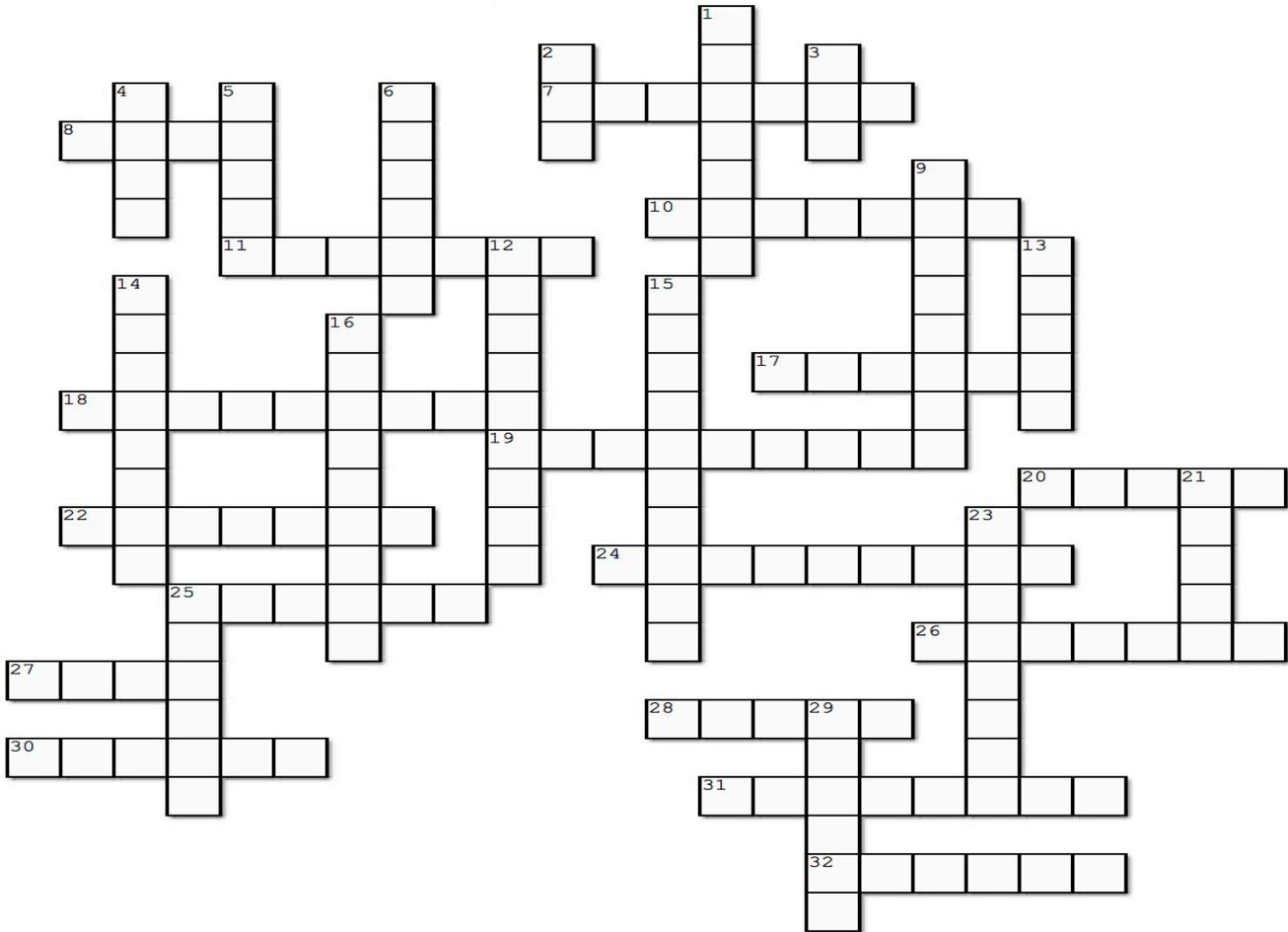
Prior to the death of Joshua, they are confronted by The Angel of Yahweh. He charges them with failure and points out that as a result, the Canaanites will be as thorns to them on every side. This is added to the language of Judges 3 that speaks of the Lord allowing these Canaanites to remain to teach the generations the art of war. This is not an inconsistency, simply a reminder that God is sovereign even in using our disobedience to His glory.

In the first seventeen chapters of Judges, you see all twelve Judges that God raises up, from Othniel, the paradigm of what it meant to be a judge, to Samson, the first man recorded in the Bible to have a life-long Nazirite oath, though he broke every vow of the Nazirite in his lifetime. Deborah is the only female judge, and is presented as an exception to the rule, not as an argument for female leadership in the church of God. There are too many stories to summarize here, apart from simply noting that Judges exist as a type of redeemer that point us to Christ — in fact, their flaws remind us that we need one is is not just human, but one who is also God to deliver us from the chains of our sins.

Chromatic Notes:

- Note in Joshua 18 how there is an emphasis of the northern and southern division of the land. This anticipates the eventual north-south hostility and split that would take place after Solomon's time.
- Notice again that the priests are not given an inheritance in the land; instead, God is their inheritance and they are scattered about all of the lands as God's ambassadors to the people. Peter reminds us that all Christians are royal priests (1 Peter 2:9) and thus we too do not find our inheritance in the land, but it is being reserved for us in heaven — this world is not our home.
- I have noted before that many theologians through history have recognized The Angel of Yahweh as the pre-incarnate Christ, noting here, for example, that in Judges 2 he claims to have led the people out of Egypt, a work attributed to Jesus in Jude 5.
- As you move into judges you will notice a series of cycles: the people sin, God brings an enemy to rule over them, they repent, he sends a judge to deliver them, and the land has rest for "x" years. Notice that many of these cycles begin with "the people did what was evil..." In Hebrew, this literally reads, "the people did *the evil*." This reference to "the evil" is typically a reference to idolatry in the Bible, though it is also used of several other practices that God pronounces to be wicked. This is no light judgment, the people are acting like the pagans they drove from the land.
- It is oftentimes asked, "Did Jephthah really kill his daughter and if so, why did God allow that?" My answer is that yes, he did kill her and God permitted that to take place as a demonstration of just how sinful his people had become. Remember, the wickedness of the leader reflects the wickedness of the people.
- Sometimes people say, "Sampson" instead of "Samson," is that wrong? Yes and no. Yes, it is wrong in that "Sampson" is not the common English transliteration that Bible translations use. It is also wrong in that the Hebrew spelling is "Shimshon," so for that matter, Samson isn't really accurate. The Greek transliteration of his name uses the letter psi instead of pi to begin the last syllable of his name, transliterating it "Sampson." Of course, where the "p" or "ps" came from in the first place is open for debate.

Complete the crossword below



Created on TheTeachersCorner.net Crossword Maker

Down

1. This is where Joseph's bones are buried.
2. God allowed Canaanites to remain in the land to teach the people _____.
3. Samson was of this tribe.
4. Samson removed the city gates from this Philistine city.
5. The cities of refuge were safe places from the Avenger of _____.
6. This is where the Angel of the Lord met with the people.
9. Known for sacrificing his daughter, this judge didn't even grow up amongst the Israelites.
12. This son of Gideon would cause his family great strife.
13. This man stole money from his mom, gave it back, and she was so happy she made an idol out of it.
14. Samson was to be consecrated this at birth.
15. This person has to die before someone is able to return home from a city of refuge (2 words).
16. The Judge Ibzan was buried in this city.
21. This fat king was slain in his bathroom.
23. This tribe, along with Gad and Reuben, received their inheritance partly on the east side of the Jordan river.
25. God showed a little of his sense of humor when he called this man to be a judge — referring to him as a 'mighty man of valor' while he was hiding from the Midianites.
29. It was here that people cast lots and sought the Lord.

Across

7. Gideon's first task was to tear down one of these.
8. One of two women described in the Bible as 'Blessed amongst women...' (Hint, see Judges 5)
10. Cities but no inheritance in the land was awarded to this group _____.
11. She was the downfall of Samson.
17. He received his inheritance last.
18. This landed on Abimelech's head causing a fatal wound.
19. Deborah is introduced as the wife of this man.
20. Samson got 300 of these, tied their tails together and torches to their tails and set them loose across Philistine land.
22. This was the first of the Judges.
24. Gideon's nickname, meaning 'Let Baal contend against him.'
25. This is where Eleazar was buried.
26. Samson slew 1,000 men with a 'fresh' one of these.
27. The left-handed judge.
28. 'As for me and my _____, we will serve the Lord.'
30. Samson's father.
31. This son of the High Priest proved a mediator when Manasseh acted foolishly.
32. Shamgar slew 600 Philistines with this tool.