Patrick experienced in more modern times what Israel experienced more than 1,000 years before Christ. God is able to bless richly and overcome any enemy. “So the Lord gave Israel all the land he had sworn to give their forefathers, and they took possession of it and settled there. The Lord gave them rest on every side, just as he had sworn to their forefathers. Not one of their enemies withstood them; the Lord handed all their enemies over to them. Not one of all the Lord’s good promises to the house of Israel failed; every one was fulfilled” (21:43-45).

 Every tribe received a portion of land to call their own, and, in turn, set aside a portion for the tribe of Levi. Just as each person gave a portion of their crops, each tribe yielded a permanent portion of their gift to the ones who would lead in worship. Offerings are always the appropriate response to God’s grace.

 Offer your life as a living sacrifice to God in view of His great mercy toward you. Live in the victory He has given you in Christ.

Saturday, March 18, 2017—Joshua 22-24

 Joshua learned to follow Yahweh and lead the people by walking at the side of Moses throughout the wilderness journey. To encourage the people toward courage and faithfulness, then, was an easy task as he had seen Moses exemplify that, and Joshua had done that himself. What neither Moses nor Joshua had done was lead the people as residents. They had always been pilgrims walking toward home.

 Once the battles were done and the land was theirs, Joshua did what any good leader would do. He charged the people to live out their promises and to enjoy the goodness of God. He sent the two and one-half tribes back to the east side of the Jordan with the reminder to keep God’s commandments, to love him, walk in His ways, to obey Him, to hold fast to Him, and to serve Him with all their heart and soul (22:5).

 When the eastern tribes settled, they built an altar, and the western tribes reacted quickly. “How could you so quickly turn from Yahweh? You know the tragedy that comes from that.” The eastern tribes assured them this wasn’t idolatry. They built it as a witness between east and west that Yahweh was guide, and all 12 tribes were untied under His name.

 They began faithfully, and Joshua, even in his advanced years, urged them to follow his example. Each day is a day to consider the past and Yahweh’s faithfulness. Each day you can choose the gods of the place where you live or the gods of past cultures, but no one is worth faith and obedience like Yahweh.

 Live with courage, faith, and obedience.

*Read the Bible Through 2017*

Week 11

Sunday, March 12, 2017—Joshua 4-6

 God began the deliverance of His people from Egypt with the parting of the Red Sea. He brought them into the Promised Land with the parting of the Jordan River. Both were significant acts of God intended to increase the faith of His people and to shape the faith of future generations who heard the stories (4:6-7, 21-24). God wants His acts of power to be topics of discussion from one age to the next so each successive group can build on the faith passed to them and know Him more intimately.

 While being a provider, God does not provide the same way for each generation. For those who wandered the wilderness, He provided manna each day. When the nation came into the Promised Land, however, He ended the manna after their first Passover celebration. They now had a permanent home with land that could provide produce. He would provide through harvest rather than heavenly bread.

 What remained constant was His presence and power and their need to trust Him. His call to march around Jericho was unusual—even illogical—but simple. The people marched once a day for six days, and on the seventh, they marched seven times, and then hundreds of thousands of voices shouted in unison (6:17), and the walls came tumbling down.

 What great challenge do you see before you? God is working to show His power to overcome. Begin praising Him for the victory He will provide and move forward in obedient faith to see Him do wonders.

Monday, March 13, 2017—Joshua 7-9

 Imperfect people are the colors on the palette of the Master Artist. He uses them despite their flaws to paint a magnificent picture for His glory, but He does not allow their sin to go unnoticed or unpunished. While all are flawed, some reach a point where there flaws bring judgment.

 God gave His people a powerful victory over the magnificent city of Jericho but had strict instructions—keep nothing of the plunder. Achan decided he would keep a few items—a beautiful robe, a gold wedge, and some silver coins. When Israel marched against a small town, they were routed. Joshua inquired of Yahweh, and He said, “Israel has sinned” (7:11). The sin of one man affected the entire nation, and they had to discover which man that was. When they did, they took Achan, his family, and his possessions and destroyed them all, leaving a pile of rocks as memorial.

 Israel marched as a nation against that same small town, Ai, and totally destroyed it. They left a pile of rocks as memorial (8:28-30). Whether in His people or in some pagans, God judges sin. The fate of Achan and Ai demonstrate the wisdom of God to see sin and the justice of God to destroy it. While we know little about Ai, we can trust His judgment was righteous anger expressed toward an unholy people who failed to repent.

 Admit your imperfections. Praise God for His willingness to use you despite those flaws. Pray for wisdom, growth, and obedience so you might serve without being deceived (9:14).

Tuesday, March 14, 2017—Joshua 10-12

 Yahweh is like no other god. Myths and legends tell of divine beings who demand service from their people and who never find complete satisfaction for their appetites. The people who fear them continually search for ways to serve and appease but never expect to find comfort or relationship. On the other hand, Yahweh is above all gods and lowers Himself so His people might know Him and find hope in and provision from Him. They mutually serve one another.

 Yahweh served His people in a unique, nature-altering way in Joshua 10. The people of Gibeon had become the servants of Israel, so the five Amorite kings decided to attack them as a way of weakening Israel. When Israel marched out to defend them, Joshua prayed for God to make the sun stand still (10:12-13), and God delayed the sun’s transit. Also, while Israel attacked and drove out many, God Himself destroyed many more by hurling large hailstones on the armies.

 Joshua continued the tour of subjugation throughout the south and totally subdued the region in one campaign “because the Lord, the God is Israel, fought for Israel” (10:42). He is not only a God who has high standards for His people. He is a God who is near them and fights for them. He works to bring blessing to His own and glory to Himself.

 Thank God for His desire that you walk away from sin and walk toward Him. Thank Him for empowering you with His Spirit to do great things for His glory and your good.

Wednesday, March 15, 2017—Joshua 13-15

 “Beware the Ides of March,” the seer told Julius Caesar. None tell the reason for the warning as compellingly as Shakespeare, when he described the assassination of Caesar by some of his closest confidantes. His followers wanted to be leaders take Rome in a new direction.

 Leadership is a great challenge for any person at any era in history. Helping people become who they’ve longed to be by enduring things they never wanted is a tightrope walk to say the least. Joshua had this important assignment as Israel procured all the areas of the Promised Land.

 Balancing the needs and expectations of 13 different tribes, Joshua wrote down the specific description of the land on the east and the west sides of the Jordan River. Though he was old and well advanced in years (13:1), his job was not complete because there was still land to be taken. As a result, their jobs were not complete either. In reviewing the assignments, he was providing a reminder of what awaited them and their succeeding generations if they remained faithful to their assignment.

 He rewarded the faithfulness of Caleb by giving him Hebron in the allotment for Judah (14:6-15). Imagine the blessing this was to Caleb—a reward for trusting in God for more than 45 years—and the witness is was to all the tribes—God keeps His promises and richly blesses those who trust Him and obey Him.

 Thank God for the leaders He has placed in your life. Pray for their ability to spur their people to faithfulness and obedience.

Thursday, March 16, 2017—Joshua 16-18

 Fairy tales often begin, “Once upon a time . . .” and end with “. . . and they lived happily ever after.” The story in between often includes challenges, setbacks, victories, and love connections, and these combine to create a story compelling enough to read and experience over and over. Despite the repetition, the story is not true.

 Compare that with the details of Joshua, especially these middle chapters. This story shares the true details of real people inheriting real places to call their own. The names of geographic formations and people groups are not as exciting as the adventures of a fairy tale, yet they represent something far more consequential. God works in real life to bless His people and bring glory to His name.

 These surveys of tribal inheritance also remind us how God sets expectations but allows His people the freedom to determine whether they will fully obey. Joshua says Ephraim “did not dislodge the Canaanites living in Gezer” (16:10). They were to drive the people out completely, but they couldn’t. Manasseh faced a similar outcome. The Canaanites lived among them and did forced labor.

 God’s people live in a fallen world tainted by sin. The Canaanite presence brought continual temptation to God’s people, temptation they would not have faced if they had obeyed fully. To live in this world guarantees temptation. To fail to obey fully only adds to the conflict. Reading these inheritance accounts may not be as thrilling as a fairy tale, but it is a useful reminder of the blessing of obedience and faithfulness of God.

Friday, March 17, 2017—Joshua 19-21

 Saint Patrick grew up in England but was sold into slavery in Ireland as a young man. After several years there, he escaped and returned home. His commitment to the Lord, however, gave him a burning desire to return to his slave masters with the message of Christ. He did so and spent his adulthood sharing the gospel and seeing the pagans of the island surrender themselves to Christ.