

Sunday, March 9, 2025 pm

Journey Through the Bible (38)

Dividing the Land

Joshua 13-22

Tonight we continue our “journey through the Bible”. We are continuing with part 7 of 17, The conquest of Canaan. We have devoted 2 lessons to this time period – crossing the Jordan, conquering Jericho and Ai, and the conquest of the rest of the land.

In this lesson we find with the land subdued it was time to divide the land among the tribes. We will reserve our next lesson for the farewell addresses of Joshua. Then we will proceed with the period of the judges. As we have done throughout this study, we will first discuss the text and then we will make some applications for today.

- I. The text
 - a. 13:1- Joshua is old, advanced in years. YHWH tells him there is much land yet to be possessed. There was land southwest of Israel (land of the Philistines and Geshurites) that needed to be addressed. They would not do this and the Philistines will be trouble for centuries beyond this. Other peoples and places throughout the conquered land are also listed (13:1-7) Joshua is commended to divide the land by lot to the remaining tribes.
 - b. 13:8-33 describes the territories of Reuben, Gad & Manasseh (half-tribe) east of the Jordan.
 - c. 14:1-5 – the remaining tribes, 9½ tribes that were left.
 - d. 14:6-15 – Caleb receives his inheritance within his tribal boundaries, Judah. It has been 45 years since the land was promised to him by Moses. Note vs. 10-11 – he is still strong. NOTE: This is one of the texts from which we determine the conquest took between 5-7 years (Joshua was 40 when they spied the land and now he is 85 years old. 40 y/o + ~38 years in the wilderness + 7 years of conquest = 85.
 - e. 15:1-12 – Judah is given a large portion of land encompassing their southern border
 - f. 15:13-19 – Caleb then occupies his inheritance and enlists the help of Othniel who will marry his daughter.
 - g. 16:1- 17:18 – Next Ephraim and West Manasseh are given their territory. There were in the central area of their promised land. 2 events are worthy of note in this: 1) The daughters of Zelophehad ask for their inheritance (16:3-4, recall Numbers 27:1-11 where Moses had declared their inheritance from YHWH); 2) They wanted more land because of their size. Vs. 12-13 records that they failed to drive out inhabitants of various cities (12-13). They approach Joshua who tells them to go to the forest country and clear a place and also to engage the Canaanites in the valley even if they were strong. They balked but Joshua did not relent from his instructions.
 - h. 18:1-19:48 – 7 tribes remained. 3 men from each of these tribes were sent throughout the land to survey and divide it into 7 portions. When they returned the land was divided by lot, beginning in this order – Benjamin (between Judah and Ephraim); Simeon (assimilated into Judah’s territory because it was so large – see also Genesis 49:5-7 – recall the farewell “blessing” of Israel to Simeon and Levi); Zebulun (North of Manasseh west); Issachar (East of Zebulun & North of Simeon); Asher (Far northwest); Naphtali (East of Asher & north of Issachar). The Sea of Chinnereth (Sea of Galilee) was part of their eastern border; Lastly – Dan (North of Judah, South of Ephraim & Manasseh, & west of Benjamin). Its western most border was the Mediterranean sea. Note Josh. 19:47 – they also conquer a town on Israel’s northern most border – Leshem and rename it Dan.

- i. 19:49-51 – Joshua receives his inheritance in the midst of his tribe Ephraim. He was given the city of Timnath Serah.
- j. 20:1-9 – Records the 6 cities of refuge. 3 on each side of the Jordan.
 - i. The western cities: Kadesh to the north (in Naphtali), Shechem in Ephraim (central), and Kirjah Arba (Hebron – south) in Judah. Of note, all 3 of these were in mountains – visible from a distance. Access to the cities was clearly marked giving opportunity to the accused to get there.
 - ii. The Eastern cities: Bezer in the tribe of Reuben (south), Romoth Gilead in Gad (central) & Golan of Bashan (north) In Manasseh.
 - iii. These cities were established so that any Israelite who accidentally killed someone could flee there and be judged. If he was exonerated, he would reside in the city until the death of the High Priest. If he was found guilty, he would be turned over to the avenger of blood (nearest relative of the deceased).
 - iv. Note Deut. 19:8-10 a promise of 3 more cities for enlarged territory if they were faithful (never happened).
- k. 21:1-42 – cities were given to the Levites throughout the land of Canaan, on both sides of the Jordan. They were given cities with their surrounding common lands for their livestock and crops (1500 feet – 1000 cubits – Numbers 35:1-5).
- l. 21:43-45 – The promised is fulfilled. This is an important passage as it declares the YHWH fulfilled His land and nation promise to Abraham. Sometimes premillennialists argue that the territory described in the conquest is less than what He promised Israel in Numbers 34:1-15. Thus, they say His promise has yet to be fulfilled. BUT: 1) The land described WOULD be obtained during the reign of Solomon & 2) Our current text tells us that YHWH HAD fulfilled His promise that He made to Abraham and their fathers. Not a word failed. I will go with what the text says.
- m. 22:1-34 – with the dividing of the land complete, the eastern tribes are permitted to return. They had fulfilled their obligations and are blessed by Joshua. Vs. 5, they are warned to remain faithful. Vs. 8-9 – they are told to share with their brethren and families that stayed behind. Vs. 10-34 – the tribes build an altar as a memorial (not for sacrifice). Israel west hears about it and gathers an army to confront them, lest the wrath of God be kindled again. The eastern tribes set them at ease that the altar was a memorial to remind them to remain faithful to God AND so that the western tribes would NOT forget them as their brethren. When Phinehas the high Priest heard this, the people rejoiced and glorified God. They returned to their land. The altar was called, “witness”.

II. **Lessons to apply**

- a. While God will give what He has promised, you must do the work to obtain and maintain it. Consider the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh asking for more land. Joshua told them it was there and to take it. Don’t make excuses. Scripture continually emphasizes obedience and our need to act – Titus 2:14, Ephesians 2:10, Philippians 2:12 – work out your own salvation, etc.
- b. Surveying the land (18:1-10). Before we act, we need to “survey” what needs to be done.
 - i. Proverbs 21:5, *The plans of the diligent lead surely to plenty, But those of everyone who is hasty, surely to poverty.*
 - ii. Luke 14:28-31, as Jesus taught about the seriousness of discipleship, He emphasized their need to count the cost. 2 examples are given – a tower and going to war. Successful endeavors, INCLUDING spiritual, require planning.
- c. Cities of refuge – a study within itself, there are some lessons to learn from these.
 - i. God believes in true justice and fairness. He wants us to be just in our dealings with others.

- ii. Of interest is the meaning of the names of these 6 cities.
 1. Kadesh means to be holy or righteous.
 2. Shechem means shoulder. A shoulder is a place of strength.
 3. Hebron means to ally oneself, fellowship.
 4. Bezer means fortress. Literally it meant to make on inaccessible (or protected).
 5. Ramoth means heights, to be exalted.
 6. Golan means joy.
- iii. Christ is accessible to us. Delay could mean death. Jesus is our high Priest – he will not die again. As long as we remain in Him, we are safe.
- iv. Consider these cities in light of God & Christ.
 1. Because of our guilt of sin we can flee to Christ for refuge – Hebrews 6:17-18 speaks of us fleeing to God for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. Recall how Jesus invites us to come to Him for rest (Matthew 11:28-30).
 2. **Kadesh** means righteous. Jesus is our righteous Savior – 2 Corinthians 5:21, He dies for us “that we might become the righteousness of God.”
 3. **Shechem** meaning shoulder. It is a place of strength. Jesus as our good Shepherd can rescue us and carry us on His shoulders to safety – Luke 15:5. 2 Corinthians 12:9, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.”
 4. **Hebron** means fellowship. 1 John 1:7 as we walk in the light we have fellowship with one another.
 5. **Bezer** means fortress. Christ is a source of protection we can turn to. Matthew 28:20. Hebrews 13:5-6 notes the He has promised to never leave nor forsake us.
 6. **Ramoth** means heights or exalted. Philippians 2:6-9 – God has highly exalted Him.
 7. **Golan** means joy. Christ is our joy. Philippians 4:4 calls for us to rejoice in the Lord always. Romans 5:11 notes that “*we rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have received the reconciliation.*”
- d. God keeps His word and is able to accomplish His promises – Joshua 21:43-45 is a powerful passage.
- e. Investigate before you act. When the eastern tribes returned, a war almost started because of a failure to communicate. WHEN they did communicate they cleared up the matter.
Cf. James 1:19-20 – be swift to hear, slow to speak...; Matthew 18:15 – if your brother sins, go to him (and clear it up).

And thus we can see lessons to learn from the conquest. Ultimately, when we think of conquest, we must consider our need to conquer whatever stands in our way of serving our Lord and Savior. It is only after we have overcome that we will receive our inheritance (1 Peter 1:3-4). What about you? Do you have hope of entering His promised land? Are you doing your part to gain our inheritance? How can we help? Think about it!