

THE DIVINE COMMAND TO DIVIDE THE LAND

Joshua 13

There are **three parts in the life and journey of Israel** that parallel's one's spiritual life:

- **Egypt...bondage, sin, slavery, lost...430 years.**
Red Sea...faith
- **Wilderness...carnal, aimlessly wandering...40 years.**
Jordan River...faith
- **Canaan...Lordship, victorious Christian life.**

There are also three parts to the book of Joshua...three divisions:

- **The PROMISE of the land (Opening)...Chapters 1-5.**
- **The PROBLEMS in the land (Overcoming)...Chapters 6-12.**
- **The POSSESSING of the land (Occupying)...Chapters 13-24.**

“Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel. Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and as far as the Great Sea toward the setting of the sun will be your territory.”

~Joshua 1:2-4

This was a fulfillment of the promise God made to **Abraham**, that his people (**Israel**) would inherit this land: **Genesis 13:14-17; Genesis 15:18-21; Genesis 22:16-18.**

“I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.”

~Genesis 17:7-8

The same promise was restated to **Isaac: Genesis 26:3-5.**

The same promise was restated to **Jacob: Genesis 28:13; Genesis 35:12.**

The same promise was given to **Moses** and the **entire nation of Israel** ...the **seed of Abraham: Exodus 6:8.**

Canaan is also God's promise to believers...*an illustration of faith.*

Having successfully removed the major military threats to **Israel's** survival in **Canaan**, **Joshua** now transitions from the *military leader* to an *administrator*. The land conquered by warfare is now going to be divided and assigned to the various tribes...and **Joshua** would oversee this important transaction.

This was a climactic moment in the life of **Israel**. After *centuries* in **Egyptian** bondage, *decades* of wandering in the **barren wilderness**, and *years* of hard fighting in **Canaan**...the time had arrived when the **Israelites** could settle down in their own land...a **promised land**. This was a land where they could *build homes, cultivate the soil, raise families, and live in peace*. The days of land allotment was a joyous time for **Israel**.

I. **THE CLIMAX OF A LIFE: (vs. 1)**

Now **Joshua** was old and advanced in years when the Lord said to him, “You are old and advanced in years, and very much of the land remains to be possessed” (vs. 1)...

God directed **Joshua** to divide the land west of the **Jordan** at this time because he was **old and advanced in years**. Since **Joshua** died at the age of **110 (Joshua 24:29)**, he was at least in his **90's** at this time...and probably **100**.

Old and advanced in years...This phrase is mentioned in the Bible to describe **six** people. In **5** out of the **6** times that it is mentioned, this phrase is used to *describe someone who is about to experience the greatest event of their life*.

- **Abraham** and **Sarah**...told of the *birth of a son...Isaac*.
- **Zacharias** and **Elizabeth**...announcing the *birth of John the Baptist*.
- **Joshua**...used to *allot the land* to be occupied by **Israel**.

The **sixth** person...**David**. It is used in a *negative* sense stating that *the sword would not leave him*.

It seems that very few Christians end or finish well. Ie. **Moses...Eli...Samson...Aaron...Lot...Saul...Solomon**...even present day pastors.

God's commission to **Joshua** had included not only *conquering the land* but also *distributing it* among the tribes (**Joshua 1:6**).

Joshua: Described in Scripture as...

- A *servant* (of Moses).
- A *military leader*.
- A *spiritual giant*.
- An *administrator*.

II. THE COMMAND TO DIVIDE THE LAND: (**vs. 6-7**)

All the inhabitants of the hill country from Lebanon as far as Misrephoth-maim, all the Sidonians, I will drive them out from before the sons of Israel; only allot it to Israel for an inheritance as I have commanded you (**vs. 6**)...

Notice God's *continued presence* and *activity* in the life of Israel... I will drive them out from before the sons of Israel. He had brought them out of **Egypt**...sustained them through the **wilderness** ...brought them into the land of **Canaan**...and now promises to **drive out** all the enemy to fulfill His promise of an **inheritance** of the land.

The land that remained to be taken is described from the *south* to the *north*...and is the land that was to be allotted to the remaining **nine and one-half tribes**.

Now therefore, apportion this land for an inheritance to the nine tribes and the half-tribe of Manasseh (**vs. 7**)...

III. THE CONFIRMATION GIVEN TO THE 2 ½ TRIBES: (**vs. 8-13**)

Joshua was next called on to recognize and confirm what **Moses** had previously promised to the tribes of **Reuben, Gad**, and the **half-tribe of Manasseh**.

With the other half-tribe, the Reubenites and the Gadites received their inheritance which Moses gave them beyond the Jordan to the east, just as Moses the servant of the Lord gave to them; from Aroer, which is on the edge of the valley of the Arnon, with the city which is in the middle of the valley, and all the plain of Medeba, as far as Dibon; and all the cities of Sihon king of the Amorites, who reigned in Heshbon, as far as the border of the sons of Ammon; and Gilead, and the territory of

the Geshurites and Maacathites, and all Mount Hermon, and all Bashan as far as Salecah; all the kingdom of Og in Bashan, who reigned in Ashtaroth and in Edrei (he alone was left of the remnant of the Rephaim); for Moses struck them and dispossessed them. But the sons of Israel did not dispossess the Geshurites or the Maacathites; for Geshur and Maacath live among Israel until this day (**vs. 8-13**)...

The 2 ½ tribes chose as **Lot** did...on the *basis of appearance* using their *eyes* (**Genesis 13:10-11**). They *settled for second best*. They settled for land that God never intended to be occupied by Israel.

“Now the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad had an exceedingly large number of livestock. So when they saw the land of Jazer and the land of Gilead, that it was indeed a place suitable for livestock, the sons of Gad and the sons of Reuben came and spoke to Moses and to Eleazar the priest and to the leaders of the congregation, saying... ‘The land which the Lord conquered before the congregation of Israel, is a land for livestock, and your servants have livestock.’ They said, ‘If we have found favor in your sight, let this land be given to your servants as a possession; do not take us across the Jordan’.”

~Numbers 32:1-2, 4-5

Only after they had agreed to fight for their brothers to defeat the people living in **Canaan**, did **Moses** agree to give them the land that they had requested. They agreed that...

“We will be armed ready to go before the sons of Israel, until we have brought them to their place, while our little ones live in the fortified cities because of the inhabitants of the land. We will not return to our homes until every one of the sons of Israel has possessed his inheritance. For we will not have an inheritance with them on the other side of the Jordan and beyond, because our inheritance has fallen to us on this side of the Jordan toward the east. So Moses said to them, ‘If you will do this, if you will arm yourselves before the Lord for the war, and all of you armed men cross over the Jordan before the Lord until He has driven His enemies out from before Him, and the land is subdued before the Lord, then afterward you shall return and be free of obligation toward the Lord and toward Israel, and this land shall be yours for a possession before the Lord. But if you will not do so, behold, you

have sinned against the Lord, and be sure your sin will find you out'."

~Numbers 32:17-23

The **2 ½ tribes** possessed large herds of livestock, and they were now anxious to return and settle in the rich grazing lands of the **Transjordan**.

Was the request of the **2 ½ tribes** to settle in **Transjordan** a wise one? History would seem to answer **no**. Their territory had no natural boundaries to the east and were therefore constantly exposed to invasion by the **Moabites, Canaanites, Arameans, Midianites, Amalekites**, and others. And eventually when the **kings of Assyria** looked covetously towards **Canaan...Reuben, Gad**, and the **half-tribe of Manasseh** were the first to be carried into captivity by the **Assyrian** armies (**I Chronicles 5:26**).

A survey of the land that they received is given in the following verses (**Joshua 13:9-12; Joshua 12:1-5**).

IV. THE CITIES GIVEN TO THE TRIBE OF LEVI: (vs. 14, 33)

Only to the tribe of Levi he did not give an inheritance; the offerings by fire to the Lord, the God of Israel, are their inheritance, as He spoke to him (vs. 14)...

The tribe of **Levi** received no specific territory of land as did the other tribes. Instead the **Levites** received **48 towns** as **Moses** had specified (**Numbers 35:1-5**)...towns surrounded with pasture land for their flocks and herds (**Joshua 14:4; Joshua 21:14**).

But to the tribe of Levi, Moses did not give an inheritance; the Lord, the God of Israel, is their inheritance, as He had promised to them (vs. 33)...

Six of the cities given the **Levites** ultimately became the **cities of refuge**. The Lord provided **cities of refuge** for those *guilty of accidental homicide* so they might seek refuge until they could be tried...refuge from the avenger...the nearest relative of a murdered person.

LESSONS WE CAN LEARN:

- **God is faithful.** He will fulfill that which He promises.
- **Don't settle for second best.** Hear God...obey God...experience God.
- **Our inheritance rest in the providence of God.**