

GETTING GOD'S BEST

Joshua 17:1-5

After the conquest of the **Promised Land**, and after **Caleb's** request for his inheritance was granted, **Joshua** returned to allocating the land to the descendants of the sons of **Jacob (Israel)**...the remaining *nine and a half tribes*...the land formerly occupied by the **Canaanites**. Remember, **Reuben, Gad**, and the other **half-tribe of Manasseh** received their inheritance *east of the Jordan*.

The land now to be divided stretched from the **Jordan River** on the *east*, to the **Mediterranean** on the *west*. From *north* to *south*, it covered the territory between the **Sinai Peninsula** and the ancient coastal nation of **Phoenicia**. The land was allotted to all the descendants of **Jacob's** sons except **Levi**. Remember, God provided **48 cities** throughout **Palestine** for use of the **Levites**. **Levi's** portion went to the *two sons of Joseph*...**Manasseh** and **Ephraim**.

Judah was the first to receive an inheritance, and as the largest tribe, her portion exceeded that of any other (**Joshua 15**). **Jacob's** prophesy regarding **Judah** and his seed was remarkably fulfilled in her land allotment (**Genesis 49:8-12**).

- *Judah was surrounded by enemies* (**Genesis 49:8-9**).
- *The land allotted to Judah was ideally suited for the planting of vineyards* (**Genesis 49:11-12**).
- *Judah was the tribe from which Messiah would come* (**Genesis 49:10; Matthew 1:1-3; Luke 3:23, 33**).

The other tribes followed in succession receiving their land.

But in the midst of allotting the land...we need to pause and see *three illustrations of people who received God's best*. A picture of **grace**.

I. THE DAUGHTERS OF ZELOPHEHAD: (**vs. 3**) A proper appeal.

Now this was the lot for the tribe of **Manasseh**, for he was the firstborn of **Joseph**. To **Machir** the firstborn of **Manasseh**, the father of **Gilead**, were allotted **Gilead** and **Bashan**, because he was a man of war. So the lot was made for the rest of the sons of **Manasseh** according to their families: for the sons of **Abiezer** and for the sons of **Helek** and for the sons of **Asriel** and for the sons of **Shechem** and for the sons of **Hepher** and for the sons of

Shemida; these were the male descendants of **Manasseh** the son of **Joseph** according to their families (**vs. 1-2**)...

The descendants of **Makir**, **Manasseh's** firstborn, settled in **Trans-jordan**...the *east side* of the **Jordan** (**vs. 1-2**). The remaining heirs settled in **Canaan** proper and were given the territory *north* of **Ephraim** extending also from the **Jordan River** to the **Mediterranean** (**vs. 7-10**). But **Zelophehad** didn't have a son to receive an inheritance. As a result, his *five daughters* went to **Eleazar the priest**, **Joshua**, and to the other **leaders** to request their rightful inheritance.

Eleazar the priest (**vs. 4**)...**Aaron's** son (**Joshua 24:33**). Remember both **Aaron** and **Moses** both died in the *wilderness*. **Eleazar** became the **high priest** after his father's death.

However, **Zelophehad**, the son of **Hepher**, the son of **Gilead**, the son of **Machir**, the son of **Manasseh**, had no sons, only daughters; and these are the names of his daughters: **Mahlah** and **Noah**, **Hoglah**, **Milcah** and **Tirzah**. They came near before **Eleazar the priest** and before **Joshua** the son of **Nun** and before the **leaders**, saying, "The Lord commanded **Moses** to give us an inheritance among our brothers." So according to the command of the Lord he gave them an inheritance among their father's brothers (**vs. 3-4**)...

What they were referring to was the promise made in **Numbers 27:1-11**.

"Then the daughters of Zelophehad, the son of Hepher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, of the families of Manasseh the son of Joseph, came near; and these are the names of his daughters: Mahlah, Noah and Hoglah and Milcah and Tirzah. They stood before Moses and before Eleazar the priest and before the leaders and all the congregation, at the doorway of the tent of meeting, saying, 'Our father died in the wilderness, yet he was not among the company of those who gathered themselves together against the Lord in the company of Korah; but he died in his own sin, and he had no sons. Why should the name of our father be withdrawn from among his family because he had no son? Give us a possession among our father's brothers.' So Moses brought their case before the Lord. Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 'The daughters of Zelophehad are right in their state-

ments. You shall surely give them a hereditary possession among their father's brothers, and you shall transfer the inheritance of their father to them. Further, you shall speak to the sons of Israel, saying, "If a man dies and has no son, then you shall transfer his inheritance to his daughter. If he has no daughter, then you shall give his inheritance to his brothers. If he has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to his father's brothers. If his father has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to his nearest relative in his own family, and he shall possess it; and it shall be a statutory ordinance to the sons of Israel, just as the Lord commanded Moses"."

~Numbers 27:1-11

Zelophehad was the *great-great-grandson* of **Manasseh** (**Numbers 27:1**).

The order of inheritance: the breakdown of the allocation...

- **Tribe...Manasseh**
- **Family...Hepher**
- **Clan** (household)...**Zelophehad**
- **Person** (individual)...**Five daughters**

Getting God's Best: The daughters of Zelophehad made a godly appeal.

- They received God's best because they had *confidence that God would keep His Word*...They knew that God had spoken.
- They had come to know the *character of God*...they trusted God.

This incident is very significant, for it shows a concern that God has for every individual...regardless of gender (male or female). At a time, and in a culture when most societies and nations regarded women as simply an article of tangible property, God blessed them and honored them.

II. THE DESCENDANTS OF JOSEPH: (vs. 14-18) Their belligerent complaint.

The house of **Joseph** was *prominent* and was made up of the tribes of **Ephraim** and **Manasseh**. They inherited the rich territory of central **Canaan**. Because **Joseph** kept the whole family alive during the famine in **Egypt**, the patriarch **Jacob** ordained that **Joseph's** two

sons, **Ephraim** and **Manasseh**, should be made founders and heads of tribes along with their uncles (**Genesis 48:5**).

"Then Jacob said to Joseph, 'God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me, and He said to me, 'Behold, I will make you fruitful and numerous, and I will make you a company of peoples, and will give this land to your descendants after you for an everlasting possession.' Now your two sons, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; Ephraim and Manasseh shall be mine, as Reuben and Simeon are'."

~Genesis 48:3-5

Their territory in **Canaan** was in many respects the most *beautiful* and *fertile*.

- Through God's Word we have the *authority* and the *ability* to overcome obstacles and get God's best. **Joseph: pit...prison... palace**. Today, we have that same *authority* and *ability* through Christ.
- To use God's *authority* and receive the *ability*, one must recognize his *weaknesses* and *inability*, and then release his "will"... "*I can't, but He will.*"

"I can do all things through Him who strengthens me."

~Philippians 4:13

In addition to the *historical lesson* there is a *spiritual lesson* here. With *blessing* comes *responsibility*. The men of **Ephraim**, like those of **Judah**, didn't completely drive out the **Canaanites** from their region. It is all too easy for a believer to *tolerate* and *excuse sin* only to wake up to the grim realization that it has risen up to *possess* them, *hold them in bondage*, and lead them to *spiritual defeat*. It pays to deal with sin decisively and directly.

III. JOSHUA: (Joshua 19:49-50) A patient faith.

Whereas **Caleb's** inheritance was determined *first* (**Joshua 14:6-15**), **Joshua's** was *last*. Only after all the tribes had received their allotments did **Joshua** ask for his. What a *selfless spirit* he possessed...and how his behavior contrasts that of many political leaders who throughout history have used their positions and influence to enrich themselves and their families.

Joshua receives God's best for himself. **Joshua** didn't demand his inheritance to be the best. As a matter of fact...**Joshua's** choice of land further reveals his *humility*. He asked for **Timnath-serah**, a city in the *rugged, infertile, mountainous district* of his own tribe (**Ephraim**). He could have appropriated land in the richest and most productive area of **Canaan** for himself...but he didn't.

“When they finished apportioning the land for inheritance by its borders, the sons of Israel gave an inheritance in their midst to Joshua the son of Nun. In accordance with the command of the Lord they gave him the city for which he asked, Timnath-serah in the hill country of Ephraim. So he built the city and settled in it.”

~Joshua 19:49-50

“Commit your works to the Lord and your plans will be established.”

~Proverbs 16:3

“Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.”

~Philippians 4:11

With deep appreciation for his godly leadership the sons of **Israel** granted **Joshua** his modest request...and **he built the city and settled in it (Joshua 19:50)**.

In one final picture of **Joshua**...he is seen as a *builder*. We have already seen him as...

- *A spiritual giant.*
- *A strategic military commander.*
- *An administrator and leader.*

LESSONS WE CAN LEARN:

- **God is FAITHFUL to keep His Word.** When God speaks...that settles it ...it will come to pass.
- **God doesn't work based on what man thinks is FAIR. God works based on what is JUST.** The tribes didn't receive an allotment that was equal. They receive their inheritance based on what God gave them. God determined the size and location of each tribe's possession.
- **Godly leadership EXALTS and GLORIFIES God...not one's self.**