

Joshua 13
Dividing the Inheritance

NKJ Joshua 13:1 Now Joshua was old, advanced in years. And the LORD said to him: "You are old, advanced in years, and there remains very much land yet to be possessed.

2 "This is the land that yet remains: all the territory of the Philistines and all that of the Geshurites,

3 "from Sihor, which is east of Egypt, as far as the border of Ekron northward (which is counted as Canaanite); the five lords of the Philistines -- the Gazites, the Ashdodites, the Ashkelonites, the Gittites, and the Ekronites; also the Avites;

4 "from the south, all the land of the Canaanites, and Mearah that belongs to the Sidonians as far as Aphek, to the border of the Amorites;

5 "the land of the Gebalites, and all Lebanon, toward the sunrise, from Baal Gad below Mount Hermon as far as the entrance to Hamath;

6 "all the inhabitants of the mountains from Lebanon as far as the Brook Misrephoth, and all the Sidonians -- them I will drive out from before the children of Israel; only divide it by lot to Israel as an inheritance, as I have commanded you.

7 "Now therefore, divide this land as an inheritance to the nine tribes and half the tribe of Manasseh."

8 With the other half tribe the Reubenites and the Gadites received their inheritance, which Moses had given them, beyond the Jordan eastward, as Moses the servant of the LORD had given them:

9 from Aroer which is on the bank of the River Arnon, and the town that is in the midst of the ravine, and all the plain of Medeba as far as Dibon;

10 all the cities of Sihon king of the Amorites, who reigned in Heshbon, as far as the border of the children of Ammon;

11 Gilead, and the border of the Geshurites and Maachathites, all Mount Hermon, and all Bashan as far as Salcah;

12 all the kingdom of Og in Bashan, who reigned in Ashtaroth and Edrei, who remained of the remnant of the giants; for Moses had defeated and cast out these.

13 Nevertheless the children of Israel did not drive out the Geshurites or the Maachathites, but the Geshurites and the Maachathites dwell among the Israelites until this day.

14 Only to the tribe of Levi he had given no inheritance; the sacrifices of the LORD God of Israel made by fire are their inheritance, as He said to them.

15 And Moses had given to the tribe of the children of Reuben an inheritance according to their families.

16 Their territory was from Aroer, which is on the bank of the River Arnon, and the city that is in the midst of the ravine, and all the plain by Medeba;

17 Heshbon and all its cities that are in the plain: Dibon, Bamoth Baal, Beth Baal Meon,

18 Jahaza, Kedemoth, Mephaath,

19 Kirjathaim, Sibmah, Zereth Shahar on the mountain of the valley,

20 Beth Peor, the slopes of Pisgah, and Beth Jeshimoth --

21 all the cities of the plain and all the kingdom of Sihon king of the Amorites, who reigned in Heshbon, whom Moses had struck with the princes of Midian: Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba, who were princes of Sihon dwelling in the country.

22 The children of Israel also killed with the sword Balaam the son of Beor, the soothsayer, among those who were killed by them.

23 And the border of the children of Reuben was the bank of the Jordan. This was the inheritance of the children of Reuben according to their families, the cities and their villages.

24 Moses also had given an inheritance to the tribe of Gad, to the children of Gad according to their families.

25 Their territory was Jazer, and all the cities of Gilead, and half the land of the Ammonites as far as Aroer, which is before Rabbah,

26 and from Heshbon to Ramath Mizpah and Betonim, and from Mahanaim to the border of Debir,

27 and in the valley Beth Haram, Beth Nimrah, Succoth, and Zaphon, the rest of the kingdom of Sihon king of Heshbon, with the Jordan as its border, as far as the edge of the Sea of Chinnereth, on the other side of the Jordan eastward.

28 This is the inheritance of the children of Gad according to their families, the cities and their villages.

29 Moses also had given an inheritance to half the tribe of Manasseh; it was for half the tribe of the children of Manasseh according to their families:

30 Their territory was from Mahanaim, all Bashan, all the kingdom of Og king of Bashan, and all the towns of Jair which are in Bashan, sixty cities;

31 half of Gilead, and Ashtaroth and Edrei, cities of the kingdom of Og in Bashan, were for the children of Machir the son of Manasseh, for half of the children of Machir according to their families.

32 These are the areas which Moses had distributed as an inheritance in the plains of Moab on the other side of the Jordan, by Jericho eastward.

33 But to the tribe of Levi Moses had given no inheritance; the LORD God of Israel was their inheritance, as He had said to them.

Let me give you a list and lets see if you can identify what it is: Shiloh, Manassas, Antietam, Fredericksburg, Vicksburg, Chickamauga.

That's right, they are all sites of Civil War Battlefields, and although those battles took place over 140 years ago, they still resonate with Americans, many of you will have been to those cities and their associated battlefields, they are still part of the identity of many Americans, but as time goes on the associations are becoming more and more remote and the number of Americans for whom those names resonate and have meaning beyond simply being cities is growing smaller and smaller. But imagine if I'd read those names in a church here in Fayetteville in 1866. I bet you there would be hardly a dry eye in the place because of all the living associations. A father or a brother who fell at Antietam, a soldier who remembered the thrill of victory at 2nd Manassas, who could picture Stonewall on his horse and so on. Another who remembered the ignominy of defeat.

Now unless they were Civil war experts those names would have meant even less if read to people from the Czech Republic, and certainly the names themselves would have stirred up no feelings. They aren't Czech cities, Czech battles. They haven't walked all over Manassas battlefield as many of you have, and they probably don't have great granddaddies who fought there.

We face a similar problem with biblical lists, names and cities, our brains switch off at the reading of them because we don't associate actual events, or promises, or people with them. To a certain extent, that can be helped by traveling to Israel and seeing the actual locations so that you can picture them in your minds eye or taking out A Bible Atlas or O. Palmer Robertson's guide to ancient Israel. But most people don't do that, they just skip over as modern kids skip over the names of battles. They either consciously or unconsciously see them and say "this information isn't relevant to me."

But brothers and sisters, if you are Christians then this information is relevant to you, because it is a testimony to God's dealing with fellow believers, long gone now, but who were just as much inheritors of the promises as you are, people many of whom you will spend eternity with in heaven. So it is relevant, not just because knowing Mt. Hermon is in far North close to Damascus will help us to orient

ourselves, and knowing where these places are will add color to the text as we read the rest of the Old Testament, but especially because in it we can derive spiritual lessons if we read carefully. So be patient as we go through the next few chapters regarding the inheritance, remember that when these names were first read they were critically important to those tribes those people. Be gleaning through them to find spiritual food.

Now a brief summary of what we read in these texts. The war against the Canaanites has gone on for at least seven years, God has enabled Israel to destroy both of the major confederations that were raised up against them, and now Joshua is coming near the end of his own life – he is probably around 90 years old at this point - and it is time for him to divide up the land to give it to the tribes. There are still many areas of the promised land that have yet to be subdued.

In particular we read about the land of the Philistines and their main cities, ***Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron***. Who were the Philistines? Well unlike most of the other inhabitants of the land they were not descendents of Canaan they not even Semitic people. They were originally a trading people from the Aegean, they were probably originally from the Island of Crete. This makes them more Greek, than Middle Eastern. But they were going to be a real thorn in the side of the Israelites, especially because they controlled some of the best land in the Coastal plains between the mountains and the sea. Being a seafaring people they worshipped Dagon a fish God.

There were other people groups yet to be subdued, cities to be conquered, and people to be driven out, but the idea was with the major armies destroyed, the tribes themselves could do that. They could secure the lands that were being given to them. And of course that was critically important, not only so that they could take over their inheritance, but because if they did not drive those peoples out their culture and their false worship would be a snare to Israel and all the things that Moses had warned of would come about. God had assured them that HE would drive out those people in verse 6, so in a very real sense all they had to do was to command of the Lord back in Joshua 1:9 ***Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go (Joshua 1:9)*** You be faithful, and steadfast, and God will do the rest. What is critical is that they must believe the promises of God.

So Joshua starts with the Land beyond the Jordan River the land formerly of the Amorites and Amonites who had attacked Israel. He gives that land to half the tribe of Manasseh, the other half gaining an inheritance on the Western side of the Jordan in the middle of the country and the rest of that Transjordanian land going to the tribes of Gad and Reuben.

So going from top to bottom starting at Mt. Hermon in the North you have Manasseh, then in the middle you have Gad, and then finally you have Reuben going down to the Aroer, and thus the land of three tribes is split up.

There is also bad news here though, and this is going to become a more frequent lament, verse **13** ***Nevertheless the children of Israel did not drive out the Geshurites or the Maachathites, but the Geshurites and the Maachathites dwell among the Israelites until this day.***

The Israelites failed to grasp the promises of the Lord, and therefore as time goes on “its too hard” to gain our inheritance is going to be the lament. In fact, one tribe, Dan eventually abandons their inheritance, and are driven out by the Amorites, so they go looking for another one to the North and end up sacking and dispossessing the people of Laish who were not warlike.

There is mention also though of the Levites, who are not going to get land of their own. Instead they will get cities within the lands of the other tribes. This is because it was their job to serve the Lord in his worship, and thus they received a portion of the tithe and a portion of the offerings given to the land. In a sense they like the clergy of Israel, and depended on the offerings of God's people for their living as much as I and other Pastors do. For them in particular, the Lord and not the Land was their inheritance and that emphasizes their dependence upon him.

But this is not just a promise made to Levites and Pastors, but to all Christians who trust in God. We may have nothing in this world to hold on to, and yet if we have Christ we have an inheritance incorruptible that can never be taken away as Earthly treasures can.

Lam. 3:20 My soul still remembers And sinks within me.

21 This I recall to my mind, Therefore I have hope.

22 Through the LORD's mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not.

23 They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.

24 "The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "Therefore I hope in Him!"

Luke 12: 29 "And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind.

30 "For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things.

31 "But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you.

32 "Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

33 "Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys.

34 "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.