

“The Distribution of the Inheritance”

Joshua 13:1-33

INTRO:

We have come to the part of the book of **Joshua** that is after the formal conquest of the land. **Chapter 12** was a list to remind us of God’s great faithfulness in defeating this list of powerful kings through Joshua and the armies of Israel. Now we come to **chapter 13**, and we begin to discover that although the major battles are all won, more conquering needs to take place to fully possess the promises that God had made to Israel.

Although all of these names of the cities that describe the boundaries of God’s allotment of their inheritance don’t mean much more than stumbling blocks for our tongues to trip over, they were very real cities and places that described what God had given them. As we explore this bequest list from God to His people we encounter a couple of important thoughts that speak to us today. They are the promises that God has given and the most important inheritance of all.

I. Promises to Finish the Job (v. 1-7)

II. The Most Important Inheritance (v.14 and 33)

I. Promises to Finish the Job (v. 1-7)

A. I love how **chapter 13** begins; (**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.’”

While the LORD Himself repeating word for word what we have just been told in the verse to Joshua tickles my funny bone, we need to realize that Joshua did not read these words. God is acknowledging a truth that Joshua and the people of Israel needed to understand. Flat out, Joshua was getting to be an old man. He had limits to his strength and stamina. God was not going to replace him as leader yet, but He was going to transfer some of his duties to others.

B. The major duty in focus here is the responsibility to subdue the rest of the Promise Land. If much land needed to be possessed, how would it be taken if Joshua was not going to do it? The tribes of the people of God who were given the land were supposed to do it.

1. How were they going to do that? God had taken care of assuring their possession.

After specifically drawing out the borders of what He had promised, God told them how it would be done. (**Joshua 13:6–7**)

“[All this territory in the list] I [God Himself] will drive out from before the children of Israel; only divide it by lot to Israel as an inheritance, as I have commanded you. Now therefore, divide this land as an inheritance to the nine tribes and half the tribe of Manasseh.”

2. Let us pause and apply this. We too often think that the job of reaching lost with the message of the Gospel is a job for the ministry professionals that we call or hire. Sometimes missionary presentations leave the impression that the Great Commission is just for missionaries. Churches fulfill the command by taking on missionaries to do the job. We forget that God is saying to us like those in Judah, much work needs to be done. I (your Lord) have given you what is necessary to accomplish the task. We just need to believe and do the work. **(Matthew 28:20)**

“Lo, I am with you always even to the end of the age.”

C. Did the nine and a half tribes actually possess the whole of the land allotted to them? No they did not. Whose fault was that? Was it God’s fault? No. Do we ever fail to possess all that God has for us? I am sure we do. There is a passage that has always haunted me in **Hebrews 12:1–4.**

“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.”

How much effort are we spending in avoiding or fighting sin? Are we really serious about being all that the Lord Jesus Christ wants us to be? Are we serious about running the race that He has set before us?

1. A part of this promise involved the land of the Philistines. **(Joshua 13:3–4)**

“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; 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.”

Although God specifically gave the land of the Philistines to the Children of Israel, they never took it. This disobedience (an act of omission) cost the nation of Israel greatly. Think of all the times the Philistines oppressed, attacked, and discomfited Israel over the years just because they did not do what God asked them to do.

2. Will there be anything like the Philistines in our backgrounds when we stand before God? Will there be anything of the promise of God for us that we could have had, if we only obeyed

II. The Most Important Inheritance (v.14 and 33)

A. Most of the inheritance that God handed out through Joshua was a very tangible inheritance. It had boundaries and it could be located on a map. But there is one tribe who did not receive that kind of inheritance. That was the Levites. We read of them in two verses in this chapter. ***“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”*** (Joshua 13:14). The Levites are mentioned again in the end of the chapter. ***“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.”*** (Joshua 13:33).

B. The best inheritance was one that did not include a land. It is first mentioned in **Numbers 18:24.**

“For the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer up as a heave offering to the LORD, I have given to the Levites as an inheritance; therefore I have said to them, ‘Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance.’”

This verse like **Joshua 13:14** indicates the first way the Levites inherited is receiving from the worship of the true and living God. The Levites were keepers and protectors of the true worship, the only acceptable worship of the one true God.

We also are responsible as believer priests today to worship the true a living God in an acceptable way; In Spirit and Truth.

C. Second, they inherited God Himself as their inheritance. This echoes some other places in the Bible that speak of God Himself being our portion. **Psalm 73:22-26** always warms my heart.

“I was so foolish and ignorant; I was like a beast before You. Nevertheless I am continually with You; You hold me by my right hand. You will guide me with Your counsel, And afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You. My flesh and my heart fail; But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.”

1. We are not a covenant nation like Israel was. We have not been allotted an inheritance of physical land. But we still have an inheritance in our God.

2. He has committed Himself to be our inheritance. He is our joy and our salvation. Do we recognize that we have no one in heaven and earth like Him? Are we sure that He is ours?