

Our Inheritance

Joshua 13:1-33

Introduction

In the book of Joshua we have seen Promised Land occupied (chapter 11:16-23) and the enemy leaders overcome (chapter 12:1-24). Now in chapters 13-17 we are given instructions about the tribal allotments. The land east of the Jordan was to be given to Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh. The lands west of the Jordan were to be divided among the remaining 9 1/2 tribes.

You may have received an inheritance sometime in the past or you may receive an inheritance sometime in the future. It might be modest or it might be significant.

When parents leave an inheritance it might generate gratitude on the part of the heirs, it might produce bickering and fighting—it can be a force for good or evil. It might generate laziness as trust fund babies never have to work again—or it might stimulate a profound sense of responsibility as some children remember just how much labor went into their inheritance.

For the children of Israel receiving their inheritance was supposed to motivate them to do good, to follow the Lord and obey His commandments. For many centuries the children of Israel had only a past promise given to Abraham—and then Isaac and Jacob and Joseph. The generations prior to Joshua lived in tents, in slavery, in journeys. But now all that was about to change. The land of promise was to be divided and distributed to God's people.

The Lord reveals to an aging Joshua there is much left undone (13:1-2). What a profound picture of the need to persevere and endure at the end of life (vv.1-6). Also given in this chapter is the special charge to divide the land—which becomes a picture of God's faithfulness in giving the people the very thing promised (vv.6-7). The chapter reiterates the special concessions given to the two and one half tribes that elected to remain on the east side of the Jordan—a picture of compromise—of borderline believers—(vv.8-32). Mention is made of the special inheritance of the tribe of Levi—they are to be ministers—priests—their portion is the Lord (v.33).

We Christians are also promised an inheritance—a reward. In the New Testament Jesus is our inheritance. In the Old Testament there were conditional and unconditional covenants. The land was to be possessed forever. But it was conditioned—the faithfulness of the people of God. We are given a better inheritance (see Hebrews 8:6-13). Paul writes that we are joint heirs with Christ (see Romans 8:16-17). All that Jesus stands to inherit—we inherit in Him by grace. We are given permission to enjoy that inheritance now—but the full possession of God's inheritance is yet future.

The Failure To Possess And The Need To Persevere (vv.1-6)

Joshua 13:1 (NKJV) 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."

Our Inheritance

Joshua 13:1-33

Joshua was advancing in age. He was over 80 when he entered the promised land and will die at the age of 110 (Joshua 24:29).

We have every reason to believe that Joshua and the people had fought bravely and well. There are over 100 Scriptures that make reference to the subject of inheritance. In the Bible inheritance was in part the legal transmission of property after death. But for the most part the meaning of inheritance was linked to the idea of taking possession.

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

3from 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;

4from 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;

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

What is the land that remained? There were pockets of resistance in the southwest and northeast territories—still occupied by the Philistines. We also know the territories east to the Euphrates were promised to the Jews but never fully occupied.

The Philistine lands included the coastal regions in what is part of the modern Gaza strip. The region included what was called the Pentapolis—five Philistine cities.

Part of the important point of this passage—are not simply the geographical designations—but the fact that enemies remained—enemies—dedicated to the proposition that Israel must be stopped. **These enemies are dedicated to making sure the children of Israel do not live in the land unmolested or uncontested.**

This becomes a picture of the Believer's struggle. We have enemies—some visible—some invisible. The world—the flesh—the Devil. Satan targets the mind, the body, the will and our conscience. Satan uses lies and suffering and pride and accusation. Satan wants to make us ignorant of God's will, impatient with God's will—or seeks us to act—in pride—apart from or independent from God's will. Satan seeks to accuse us—either accurately or inaccurately—based on fact or based on fiction.

Your enemy wants to defeat and destroy you.

We are given tools—weapons for our defense. We have God's authoritative and inspired Word—we have the imparted grace of God and the indwelling Spirit of God and the interceding Son of God (see Wiersbe's excellent; *The Strategy of Satan pp.94-95*).

Our Inheritance

Joshua 13:1-33

The Lord Jesus has secured our inheritance. Nothing remains. However for the Christian there are battles to be fought and won.

Paul said,, “I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings” (Philippians 3:10).

The Faithfulness Of God And Our Glorious Inheritance (vv.6-7)

*6*all the inhabitants of the mountains from Lebanon as far as the Brook Misrephoth, and all the Sidonians—they 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.”

Now the Lord insists that Joshua divide the land “as an inheritance” to the remaining nine tribes and the half tribe of Manasseh.

In the book of Joshua we have seen the reoccurring theme; first there is battle—then the recognition of the faithfulness of God—the overcoming of temptation and then coming to the place of occupation of our inheritance.

The land will be divided among the tribes. God is going to keep His promise. And God will keep His promise to us. We will receive our inheritance. It is an inheritance far more valuable than land or gold or position. **The smallest inheritance of God is greater than the largest inheritance this world has to offer.**

Jesus would say; “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (see Matt.16:26 KJV).

The Foolish Choice To Live On The Opposite Side (vv.8-32)

*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:

Two tribes had already been assigned the territories east of the Jordan: Reuben and Gad.

*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;

Our Inheritance

Joshua 13:1-33

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.

Levi was excluded from the tribal allotments—which leaved 11 tribes—but Joseph’s sons constituted two tribes—Ephraim and Manasseh—bring the total to 12 once again.

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.

Joshua makes mention that Balaam the prophet was slain in the Transjordan. Balaam was a wicked prophet who compromised and brought great harm to Israel (Numbers 23-25).

We are not told at what point in the campaign that he was killed. Balaam is mentioned in 2 Peter 2:15-16; Jude 11 and Revelation 2:14.

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,

Our Inheritance

Joshua 13:1-33

Here we have an interesting problem—the tribe of Gad possessed some of the territories held by the Ammonites—which was forbidden in Deuteronomy 2:19.

“And when you come near the people of Ammon, do not harass them or meddle with them, for I will not give you any of the land of the people of Ammon as a possession, because I have it to the descendants of Lot as a possession”

The text goes on and calls it the land of the giants! But the land had been taken by the people of Sihon—and so—according to some scholars—they believe the land no longer belonged to the Ammonites.

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

There is a city mentioned in chapter 12:26 called Debir. But the Debir—here is on the east side of the Jordan—while the one mentioned earlier was on the west side of the Jordan.

27and 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.

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

29Moses 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:

30Their 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;

31half 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.

32These 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.

In short—these geographical designations are broken down—the land from Aroer by the Arnon River or gorge to the plain of Medeba—as far as Dibon. We have the land of the King of Sihon—as far as the border of the Ammonites and the land of the King of Bashan—as far as the Salecha and the royal cities of Asteroth and Edrei. The tribes failed to drive out the enemies of Geshur—and Maachah (v.13). We see the lands given to the tribe of Reuben (vv.15-23) and the lands given to the tribe of Gad (v.24) and the lands given to the tribe of Manasseh (v.29).

Let me make a few observations. We have already discussed how the tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh sought there reward on the east side of the Jordan. The risks and the rewards of such a choice. Warren Wiersbe calls these borderline believers.

Our Inheritance

Joshua 13:1-33

You will recall that when Israel camped for several months on the plains of Moab by the Jordan River the tribes of Reuben, Gad and Mannasseh saw the fertile plains and began to covet that land. **They knew this land was just short of the Promised Land. They knew it was outside of Canaan.** The South Boundary of the Promised Land began at the Dead Sea—and stretched north past the Galilee. The Jordan River was the eastern frontier of the land promised by God (see Numbers 32:3; 12)—but this did not stop the two tribes for wanting it for themselves.

According to the book of Numbers (34:1) they saw the land was very fertile and suitable for livestock. They focused their eyes on the land and wanted it (covet). They were willing to compromise to secure the land. When they asked Moses—his first response was anger—and Moses charged them with being disloyal—half-hearted and selfish on their insistence until Moses was forced to work out a compromise (see Numbers 32:6-15). **The compromise included—he would give them the land if they agreed to fight for the remainder of the tribes to inherit the Promised Land. In fact they led the charge.**

But their motives are evident—selfishness—covetousness—and compromise. In the Scriptures they would forever be—“on the other side” “across the Jordan”. **Their land was under continual attack from invading armies from the east.** There were no natural barriers to protect them from the Moabites, the Ammonites, the Assyrians, the Midianites and the Amalkites and the other nomadic tribes of the desert. Because of their covetousness and compromise they would adopt the ways of their neighbors—and they would be the first taken into captivity by the Assyrians. No wonder Wiersbe calls them **borderline believers.**

The Favor Of God For Those Who Choose Him (vv.14; 33)

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

The children of Israel were to inherit Canaan; the children of Levi were to inherit the Lord Himself. The nation Israel were looked at as God’s inheritance (see Psalm 33:12).

The fact that the Levites did not receive a tribal allotment does not mean they were homeless or without lands or cities. God did assign them cities and lands throughout the land. They were scattered in some 48 places (see Joshua 21:41). **This made the priests of Levi—available to all the people (see John MacArthur; The MacArthur Bible Commentary; p. 265).**

According the Bible the Messiah was to receive the nations (Gentiles) as His inheritance. God’s promises are seen as an inheritance to His people.

In the book of Colossians (1:12-14) Paul writes; “giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. (13) He has delivered us from the

Our Inheritance

Joshua 13:1-33

power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, (14) in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sin.”

Part of our inheritance includes “qualification”—“deliverance” “conveyance” “redemption” “forgiveness”.

Part of our inheritance we receive in the here and now. Qualification—deliverance—from the powers of darkness—transportation—into the kingdom of the Son of His love. That’s what conveyed means—brought—transported. We have redemption through His blood and forgiveness of sin.

Part of our inheritance includes the hope of heaven. The Bible says “The soul that sins shall surely die” (Ezekiel 18:4) but believers are made alive in Christ forevermore (see 1 Cor. 15:22 Romans 6:23). Heaven is not a reward for diligent service—or because we won hard fought battles over our enemies—or conquest over secret sins—heaven is an inheritance—God’s free gift—contained in the promise of Jesus—“if I grand prepare a place for you, I will come come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am you may be also” (John 14:3).

Conclusion

Any thing that we receive from the Lord can rightly be called an inheritance. For the Christian it includes the rewards of salvation and discipleship. We are fellow heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17). In the Book of Hebrews—we are given the explicit statement that our inheritance required the death of the testator—Jesus Christ. In order for a “Will” to take effect it requires the death of the testator. Jesus dies—and the covenant or the will takes effect (Hebrews 9:16-17).

When Patrick Henry died his will stipulated; “This is all the inheritance I can give to my dear family. The religion of Christ can give them one which will make them rich indeed.”

“An inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you. . .” (1 Peter 1:4).