

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown
Bible Study Notes
3-15-23

Joshua 13

Land Still to Be Taken – Verse 1

¹ When Joshua had grown old, the LORD said to him, “You are now very old, and there are still very large areas of land to be taken over.

13:1 The following chapters describe how the Promised Land was to be divided among the 12 tribes. First, the tribe of Levi was not to have any land because they were to spend all their energies serving the people, not their own interests (13:14; 21). Second, the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh had already received land east of the Jordan River, which had been given to them by Moses (Numbers 32). Third, the tribes of Judah and Joseph (Ephraim and the other half-tribe of Manasseh) had received land that their ancestor Jacob had promised them 450 years earlier (Genesis 48:22; Joshua 15–17). The rest of the tribes divided up the remaining land by casting sacred lots (chapter 18).

13:1 Through Jacob’s original blessing of his sons (Genesis 49) and Moses’ blessing of the 12 tribes (Deuteronomy 33), the type of land each tribe would receive was already known. The two blessings were prophetic, for although Joshua cast lots to determine the land to be given to each of the remaining tribes, the allotments came out just as Jacob and Moses had predicted.

13:1 Joshua was getting old—he was between 85 and 100 years of age at this time. God, however, still had work for him to do. Our culture often glorifies the young and strong and sets aside those who are older. Yet older people are filled with the wisdom that comes with experience. They are very capable of serving if given the chance and should be encouraged to do so. Believers are never allowed to retire from God’s service. Those past retirement age should not assume that age disqualifies or excuses them from serving God.

The Land That Remains To Be Occupied Is Described – Verses 2-7

² “This is the land that remains: all the regions of the Philistines and Geshurites, ³ from the Shihor River on the east of Egypt to the territory of Ekron on the north, all of it counted as Canaanite though held by the five Philistine rulers in Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath and Ekron; the territory of the Avvites ⁴ on the south; all the land of the Canaanites, from Arah of the Sidonians as far as Aphek and the border of the Amorites; ⁵ the area of Byblos; and all Lebanon to the east, from Baal Gad below Mount Hermon to Lebo Hamath. ⁶ “As for all the inhabitants of the mountain regions from Lebanon to Misrephoth Maim, that is, all the Sidonians, I myself will drive them out before the Israelites. Be sure to allocate this land to Israel for an inheritance, as I have instructed you, ⁷ and divide it as an inheritance among the nine tribes and half of the tribe of Manasseh.”

13:2-6 Them I will drive out from before the children of Israel: God promised I will drive [them] out from before the children of Israel, but He intended that each tribe trust God for this in the portion of land divided to them by lot.

13:7 Divide this land as an inheritance to the nine tribes and half the tribe of Manasseh: Each tribe was responsible to possess their own land completely. Much of the land was unconquered at this point, but God's plan was to go ahead and include it in the divisions among the tribes. God's desire was that it would eventually be conquered by the Israelites. God knows the future, and as he leads you he already knows about the victories that lie ahead. But just as the Israelites still had to go to battle and fight, we must still face the trials and fight the battles of our unconquered land.

13:7 What are our unconquered lands? They may be overseas missionary territories, new languages in which to translate the Bible, new missionary areas in our neighborhoods, interest groups or institutions that need redemptive work, unchallenged public problems or ethical issues, unconfessed sin in our lives, or underdeveloped talents and resources. What territory has God given you to conquer? This territory is your "Promised Land." Our inheritance will be a new heaven and a new earth (Revelation 21:1) if we fulfill the mission God has given us to do.

Division Of The Land East Of The Jordan – Verses 8-13

8 The other half of Manasseh, the Reubenites and the Gadites had received the inheritance that Moses had given them east of the Jordan, as he, the servant of the LORD, had assigned it to them. **9** It extended from Aroer on the rim of the Arnon Gorge, and from the town in the middle of the gorge, and included the whole plateau of Medeba as far as Dibon, **10** and all the towns of Sihon king of the Amorites, who ruled in Heshbon, out to the border of the Ammonites. **11** It also included Gilead, the territory of the people of Geshur and Maakah, all of Mount Hermon and all Bashan as far as Salekah— **12** that is, the whole kingdom of Og in Bashan, who had reigned in Ashtaroth and Edrei. (He was the last of the Rephaites.) Moses had defeated them and taken over their land. **13** But the Israelites did not drive out the people of Geshur and Maakah, so they continue to live among the Israelites to this day.

13:8-12 With the other half tribe the Reubenites and the Gadites received their inheritance: This passage describes the portion of land divided among Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh. It was the land of King Sihon of the Amorites and King Og of Bashan.

13:13 One reason the Israelites encountered so many problems as they settled the land was that they failed to fully conquer the land and drive out all its inhabitants. The cancer-like presence of the remaining pagan peoples of Canaan caused unending difficulties for the Israelites, as the book of Judges records. Just as they failed to remove completely the sin from the land, believers today often fail to remove completely the sin from their lives—also with disastrous results. As a self-test, reread the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:1-17. Ask yourself, Am I tolerating sinful practices or thoughts? Have I accepted half-measures as good enough? Do I condemn the faults of others but condone my own?

The Unique Situation Of The Tribe Of Levi – Verses 14

14 But to the tribe of Levi he gave no inheritance, since the food offerings presented to the LORD, the God of Israel, are their inheritance, as he promised them.

13:14 Only to the tribe of Levi he had given no inheritance: Levi, the priestly tribe, was to receive no "province" such as the other tribes received; they would be given certain cities (Joshua 20-21). Instead, the Levites had as their inheritance the offerings that Israel would bring to the Lord. These were their "financial security" in Israel.

The Portion Of Reuben's Land – Verses 15-23

¹⁵ This is what Moses had given to the tribe of Reuben, according to its clans: ¹⁶ The territory from Aroer on the rim of the Arnon Gorge, and from the town in the middle of the gorge, and the whole plateau past Medeba ¹⁷ to Heshbon and all its towns on the plateau, including Dibon, Bamoth Baal, Beth Baal, Meon, ¹⁸ Jahaz, Kedemoth, Mephaath, ¹⁹ Kiriathaim, Sibmah, Zereth Shajar on the hill in the valley, ²⁰ Beth Peor, the slopes of Pisgah, and Beth Jeshimoth— ²¹ all the towns on the plateau and the entire realm of Sihon king of the Amorites, who ruled at Heshbon. Moses had defeated him and the Midianite chiefs, Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur and Reba—princes allied with Sihon—who lived in that country. ²² In addition to those slain in battle, the Israelites had put to the sword Balaam son of Beor, who practiced divination. ²³ The boundary of the Reubenites was the bank of the Jordan. These towns and their villages were the inheritance of the Reubenites, according to their clans.

13:15-23 Because of Joseph's godly character (Genesis 49:22-26), the tribes descended from him—Ephraim and Manasseh—were given the richest, most fertile land in all of Canaan. Judah, who offered himself in exchange for his brother Benjamin's safety (Genesis 44:18-34), received the largest portion of land, which eventually became the southern kingdom and the seat of David's dynasty. Reuben, who slept with one of his father's wives (Genesis 49:4), was given desert land, the region described here. The blessings Jacob gave to his sons according to their character seem also to be reflected in the characteristics of the land each tribe later received.

The Portion Of Gad's Land – Verses 24-28

²⁴ This is what Moses had given to the tribe of Gad, according to its clans: ²⁵ The territory of Jazer, all the towns of Gilead and half the Ammonite country as far as Aroer, near Rabbah; ²⁶ and from Heshbon to Ramath Mizpah and Betonim, and from Mahanaim to the territory of Debir; ²⁷ and in the valley, Beth Haram, Beth Nimrah, Sukkoth and Zaphon with the rest of the realm of Sihon king of Heshbon (the east side of the Jordan, the territory up to the end of the Sea of Galilee). ²⁸ These towns and their villages were the inheritance of the Gadites, according to their clans.

13:24-28 This lay north of Reuben's lot; the country of Gilead lay in this tribe, so famous for its balm that it is thought strange indeed if there be no balm in Gilead, and the cities of Jabesh-Gilead and Ramoth-Gilead which we often read of in scripture.

The Portion Of Half The Tribe Of Manasseh's Land – Verses 29-32

²⁹ This is what Moses had given to the half-tribe of Manasseh, that is, to half the family of the descendants of Manasseh, according to its clans: ³⁰ The territory extending from Mahanaim and including all of Bashan, the entire realm of Og king of Bashan—all the settlements of Jair in Bashan, sixty towns, ³¹ half of Gilead, and Ashtaroth and Edrei (the royal cities of Og in Bashan). This was for the descendants of Makir son of Manasseh—for half of the sons of Makir, according to their clans. ³² This is the inheritance Moses had given when he was in the plains of Moab across the Jordan east of Jericho.

13:29 The tribe of Manasseh was divided into two half-tribes. This occurred when many people from the tribe wanted to settle east of the Jordan River in an area that was especially suited for their flocks (Numbers 32:33). The rest of the tribe preferred to settle west of the Jordan River in the land of Canaan.

More On The Inheritance Of The Levites – Verse 33

³³ But to the tribe of Levi, Moses had given no inheritance; the LORD, the God of Israel, is their inheritance, as he promised them.

13:33 The tribe of Levi was dedicated to serving God. The Levites needed more time and mobility than a landowner could possibly have. Giving them land would mean saddling them with responsibilities and loyalties that would hinder their service to God. Instead, God arranged for the other tribes to meet the Levites' needs through donations. (See Numbers 35:2-4 for how the Levites were to receive cities within each tribal territory.)

13:33 Many of us are dissatisfied with our place before God. We wish He would have given us something different, and we can even get bitter towards God about this. The primary answer to this is to see ourselves as priests and to understand that our real inheritance is God Himself.