

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown
Bible Study Notes
4-12-23

Joshua 18

At Shiloh, Joshua Exhorts The Remaining Tribes To Possess Their Land – Verses 1-3

¹ The whole assembly of the Israelites gathered at Shiloh and set up the tent of meeting there. The country was brought under their control, ² but there were still seven Israelite tribes who had not yet received their inheritance. ³ So Joshua said to the Israelites: “How long will you wait before you begin to take possession of the land that the LORD, the God of your ancestors, has given you?”

18:1-2 With most of the conquest behind them, Israel moved its religious center from Gilgal to Shiloh. This was probably the first permanent location for the tabernacle. Its central location in the land made it easier for the people to attend the special worship services and yearly festivals.

18:1-2 The family of Samuel, a great priest and prophet, later would often travel to Shiloh, and Samuel would be taken there when a small boy (1 Samuel 1:3, 22). The tabernacle would remain in Shiloh through the period of the judges (about 300 years). Apparently the city was destroyed by the Philistines when the ark of the covenant was captured (1 Samuel 4–5). Shiloh never lived up to its reputation as Israel’s religious center, for later references in the Bible point to the wickedness and idolatry in the city (Psalm 78:56-60; Jeremiah 7:12-15).

18:3 But there remained among the children of Israel seven tribes which had not yet received their inheritance: Why would they not want to possess their land? Why would Joshua need to prod them? Probably because these are people who had not lived in permanent dwellings for more than a generation, and they were afraid of something new, even if it was good.

Joshua Instructs A Survey Party To Go Out And Assess The Land That It May Be Divided Among The Seven Remaining Tribes – Verses 4-8

⁴ Appoint three men from each tribe. I will send them out to make a survey of the land and to write a description of it, according to the inheritance of each. Then they will return to me. ⁵ You are to divide the land into seven parts. Judah is to remain in its territory on the south and the tribes of Joseph in their territory on the north. ⁶ After you have written descriptions of the seven parts of the land, bring them here to me and I will cast lots for you in the presence of the LORD our God. ⁷ The Levites, however, do not get a portion among you, because the priestly service of the LORD is their inheritance. And Gad, Reuben and the half-tribe of Manasseh have already received their inheritance on the east side of the Jordan. Moses the servant of the LORD gave it to them.” ⁸ As the men started on their way to map out the land, Joshua instructed them, “Go and make a survey of the land and write a description of it. Then return to me, and I will cast lots for you here at Shiloh in the presence of the LORD.”

18:4-5 Seven of the tribes had not yet been assigned their land. They gathered at Shiloh, where Joshua cast lots to determine which areas would be given to them. Using the sacred lottery, God would make the choice, not Joshua or any other human leader.

18:4-5 By this time, the Canaanites were, in most places, so weakened that they were no longer a threat. Instead of fulfilling God's command to destroy the remaining Canaanites, however, these seven tribes would often take the path of least resistance. As nomadic people, they may have been reluctant to settle down, preferring to depend economically on the people they were supposed to eliminate. Others may have feared the high cost of continued warfare. Trading for goods was easier and more profitable

18:4-6 Joshua asked why some of the tribes were putting off the job of possessing the land. Often we delay doing jobs that seem large, difficult, boring, or disagreeable. But to continue putting them off shows lack of discipline, poor stewardship of time, and, in some cases, disobedience to God. Jobs we don't enjoy require concentration, teamwork, twice as much time, lots of encouragement, and accountability. Remember this when you are tempted to procrastinate.

18:8 Making decisions by casting lots was a common practice among the Hebrews. Little is known about the actual method used in Joshua's day. A type of dice may have been used. Another possibility is that two urns were used: one containing tribal names; the other, the divisions of the land. Drawing one name from each urn matched a tribe to a region. The Urim and Thummim (explained in the note on Leviticus 8:8) may also have been used. No matter how it was done, the process removed human choice from the decision-making process and allowed God to match tribes and lands as he saw fit.

The Successful Survey Party Returns And Joshua Casts Lots To Determine Which Tribes Will Receive Which Land – Verses 9-10

⁹ So the men left and went through the land. They wrote its description on a scroll, town by town, in seven parts, and returned to Joshua in the camp at Shiloh. ¹⁰ Joshua then cast lots for them in Shiloh in the presence of the LORD, and there he distributed the land to the Israelites according to their tribal divisions.

18:9-10 This was no light task to undertake. It required learning and intelligence which they or their instructors had, in all probability, brought with them out of Egypt.

18:10 Joshua casts the lot, in dependence on God, before Him, and assigns the seven parts of the land to the seven tribes. Joshua has no successor, but the priest Eleazar does. Priests have always been there. That's how it is with us. We no longer have apostles, but we do have the priestly family. As long as there are believers who want to practically experience their priesthood by gathering as a priestly people at the tent of meeting, their inheritances will also be made known.

Allotment For Benjamin – Verse 11

¹¹ The first lot came up for the tribe of Benjamin according to its clans. Their allotted territory lay between the tribes of Judah and Joseph:

18:11 The tribe of Benjamin was given a narrow strip of land that served as a buffer zone between Judah and Ephraim, the two tribes that would later dominate the land.

The Borders Of The Inheritance Of Benjamin – Verses 12-20

¹² On the north side their boundary began at the Jordan, passed the northern slope of Jericho and headed west into the hill country, coming out at the wilderness of Beth Aven. ¹³ From

there it crossed to the south slope of Luz (that is, Bethel) and went down to Ataroth Addar on the hill south of Lower Beth Horon. ¹⁴ From the hill facing Beth Horon on the south the boundary turned south along the western side and came out at Kiriath Baal (that is, Kiriath Jearim), a town of the people of Judah. This was the western side. ¹⁵ The southern side began at the outskirts of Kiriath Jearim on the west, and the boundary came out at the spring of the waters of Nephtoah. ¹⁶ The boundary went down to the foot of the hill facing the Valley of Ben Hinnom, north of the Valley of Rephaim. It continued down the Hinnom Valley along the southern slope of the Jebusite city and so to En Rogel. ¹⁷ It then curved north, went to En Shemesh, continued to Geliloth, which faces the Pass of Adummim, and ran down to the Stone of Bohan son of Reuben. ¹⁸ It continued to the northern slope of Beth Arabah and on down into the Arabah. ¹⁹ It then went to the northern slope of Beth Hoglah and came out at the northern bay of the Dead Sea, at the mouth of the Jordan in the south. This was the southern boundary. ²⁰ The Jordan formed the boundary on the eastern side. These were the boundaries that marked out the inheritance of the clans of Benjamin on all sides.

18:16 The Valley of Ben Hinnom became associated with the worship of Molek (the Ammonite god) in Jeremiah's time. These terrible rites involved the sacrifice of children. Later the valley was used for burning garbage and the corpses of criminals and animals. Thus, the name became a synonym for hell.

18:12-20 From Joshua 13 onwards, two elements relating to inheritance have emerged: division and taking possession. The division, that is the plan, the council of God, is fixed. Taking possession is the practice, the responsibility of each tribe.

18:12-20 The borders set here, are somewhat confusing. Thus, the borders between individual believers and also between local churches are sometimes erratic. We can learn something about those interfaces between believers and churches by comparing them to a body. In a body, the bones are connected by joints. A joint does not represent our special service – we see that more in the member – but our functioning between the other members. We have a connection with each of the other members of the body.

The Cities Of The Sons Of Benjamin – Verses 21-28

21 The tribe of Benjamin, according to its clans, had the following towns: Jericho, Beth Hoglah, Emek Keziz, **22** Beth Arabah, Zemaraim, Bethel, **23** Avvim, Parah, Ophrah, **24** Kephart Ammoni, Ophni and Geba—twelve towns and their villages. **25** Gibeon, Ramah, Beeroth, **26** Mizpah, Kephirah, Mozah, **27** Rekem, Irpeel, Taralah, **28** Zelah, Haeleph, the Jebusite city (that is, Jerusalem), Gibeah and Kiriath fourteen towns and their villages. This was the inheritance of Benjamin for its clans.

18:21-28 Among the cities of the sons of Benjamin are cities with famous names from the history of Israel, such as Jericho, Beth-El, Gibeon, Rama, Mizpa, and Jebus, which is Jerusalem. The city where the temple will be built is in Benjamin. This is a fulfillment of the prophecy of Moses: "Of Benjamin he said, "May the beloved of the LORD dwell in security by Him, Who shields him all the day, And he dwells between His shoulders"" (Deuteronomy 33:12).