



Leaves From the Tree

Studies from God's Word

In 2005, Pastor Tim Bourgeois began a daily bible reading to encourage Tree of Life Christian Church and the larger body of Christ to read the entire Bible cover to cover.

The following series of articles are transcripts of Pastor Tim's original emails.

Please use these articles for meditation, personal devotion, Bible study, or your own daily Bible reading.



JOSHUA 14 - 20

Joshua 14

14:1-2 - "These are the inheritances that the people of Israel received in the land of Canaan, which Eleazar the priest and Joshua the son of Nun and the heads of the fathers' houses of the tribes of the people of Israel gave them to inherit. Their inheritance was by lot, just as the LORD had commanded by the hand of Moses for the nine and one-half tribes."

Joshua and Eleazar the high priest supervised the distribution of the Promised Land into territories for each of the tribes of Israel along with a leader representing each of the tribes. The specific portions assigned to each tribe were determined by lot. We are not given any additional details on the method of the lot, but it involved a leader (either Joshua or Eleazar) casting symbols with the names of the tribes for each territory of land until each region was assigned one of the tribes of Israel and each tribe was given a portion to settle. It is interesting that the Lord chose this method for a matter this significant that would determine the future home for all the tribes of Israel. It is important for us to understand the lot from a Biblical perspective. At first glance, it appears to be a random method for distributing the land. If such a decision were to be made in our country today, instead of a lot, there would be speeches, committees, surveys, lobbying, political television ads and an election. Even with all of that, there would continue questions regarding fairness for why the best territories were assigned to certain tribes.

The Lord's method of determining the distribution of the Promised Land was amazingly simple and avoided all of the political mess that could have been generated from this. The Lord took the decision of the land assignments out of human hands entirely. By using the lot for the distribution, no one could question the assignment of a favored portion of land to any tribe. The lot did not mean that the land was assigned in a random method though. It was not random chance that caused the lot to fall in the way that it did. The Lord ruled over the lot and caused it to fall exactly as it should to fulfill His plan for each of the tribes of Israel. The operative principle at work here is not a random occurrence of physical chance, but is spiritual and highlights the sovereignty of God. The Lord Who is so completely involved in our lives that not a single sparrow falls to the ground apart from His will, controlled the falling of the lot for His good pleasure. Israel's only responsibility in this was to trust that the portion that fell to each tribe represented the Lord's provision. We can learn from this that the Lord is to be trusted in even the seemingly random events in our lives, and especially when those events shape the course of our lives.

14:10-15 - "And now, behold, the LORD has kept me alive, just as he said, these forty-five years since the time that the LORD spoke this word to Moses, while Israel walked in the wilderness. And now, behold, I am this day eighty-five years old. I am still as strong today as I was in the day that Moses sent me; my strength now is as my strength was then, for war and for going and coming. So now give me this hill country of which the LORD spoke on that day, for you heard on that day how the Anakim were there, with great fortified cities. It may be that the LORD will be with me, and I shall drive them out just as the LORD said." Then Joshua blessed him, and he gave Hebron to Caleb the son of Jephunneh for an inheritance. Therefore Hebron became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite to this day, because he wholly followed the LORD, the God of Israel. Now the name of Hebron formerly was Kiriath-arba. (Arba was the greatest man among the Anakim.) And the land had rest from war."

In the larger story of the distribution of land to the tribes of Israel, one man's story is placed center stage. Caleb is, along with Joshua, one of the two men that survived the first generation of Israel that left Egypt and lived through the entire wilderness journey to the Promised Land. He was one of the twelve spies sent out by Moses to scout Canaan when Israel first arrived there. Remember ten of the twelve returned from their evaluation of the Promised Land with glowing reports of the condition of the land, but with fearful warnings about the giants that inhabited the land. Their report melted the hearts of Israel and undermined their courage to trust the Lord for the conquest of the land. Only Joshua and Caleb responded with unshakeable faith on that day. They both acknowledged the challenge of the giant Anakim inhabiting the land, but urged Israel to trust that the Lord would give them victory as He had promised them. The people chose to follow the influence of the ten unbelieving spies and the Lord banished the nation to a generation long wilderness journey as punishment for not trusting Him. The Lord honored Caleb for distinguishing himself from that unbelieving generation and made a special promise to him on that day. "But my servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit and has followed me fully, I will bring into the land into which he went, and his descendants shall possess it." (Numbers 14:24).

The Lord's promise assured Caleb that he would survive the wilderness years ahead and that he would live to enter the Promised Land. Not only would Caleb enter the land after the entire generation died in the wilderness, he would himself conquer, possess and settle the most challenging portion of the Promised Land; the stronghold of the giant Anakim. Now that day had come. As the various regions were being assigned to each tribe, Caleb stepped forward and made an appeal to Joshua to be given the region surrounding the city of Hebron, or Kiriath-arba as it was known then because it was the city of the greatest among the giants; Arba. This request by Caleb shows us that in his latter years, his strong faith in the Lord had not diminished one bit. We might expect Caleb to ask to be given a portion of the land that had already been fully conquered. It would be understandable, after all he had lived through, for Caleb to desire a quiet

place to settle in retirement and relaxation after the long wilderness ordeal and the conquest battles that he had already survived. Instead, Caleb specifically asked for the toughest remaining portion of land. This portion contained the greatest challenge remaining because it was the Anakim stronghold. Like another hero of faith from the tribe of Judah in a later generation, Caleb ran toward this challenge like David ran to confront the giant Goliath.

Caleb testified here that even at the age of 85 his natural strength and vigor had not diminished. This was not boasting on his part, but a humble, but bold testimony of the Lord's blessing upon his life and a declaration of his capability to rise to meet this challenge. His faith though was not in his own strength compared to the strength of the Canaanite giants. His faith was in the Lord. "It may be that the LORD will be with me, and I shall drive them out just as the LORD said." What can we gain from Caleb's example? I want to be a man like him. I want to remain strong to serve the Lord into my latter years. I have no investment in retirement, but in a wholehearted service to the Lord and His kingdom in those years in whatever He may see fit to assign to me. I want to have such a faith in Him that He would entrust to me a great challenge as He did for Caleb; even one that might make other men shrink back.

Joshua 15

15:1 - "The allotment for the tribe of the people of Judah according to their clans reached southward to the boundary of Edom, to the wilderness of Zin at the farthest south."

Chapter 15 begins a several chapter section of Joshua detailing the division of the Promised Land west of the Jordan River identifying which portions of the land were to be settled by each tribe. It is appropriate that the first tribe given a portion of the Promised Land was the tribe of Judah. Remember that Judah was actually the fourth son of Jacob, but he was elevated to the position of most prominent son among the twelve sons of Jacob because of serious failures by his three older brothers. Reuben, the firstborn son had transgressed with his father's wife, and Simeon and Levi had dishonored their father in the angry revenge attack on Shechem. The Lord's judgment upon the three older sons resulted in a loss of privilege for the tribes that bore their names. Judah became by default of his brothers, but also at a deeper level by God's sovereign determination the leading son and tribe.

Jacob had pronounced a special blessing upon Judah on his death bed. "Judah, your brothers shall praise you; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons shall bow down before you. Judah is a lion's cub; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He stooped down; he crouched as a lion and as a lioness; who dares rouse him? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the

ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples." (Genesis 49:8-10). Jacob's blessing upon Judah was displayed in this blessing of being given the first portion of the Promised Land.

The great blessing of the Lord upon Judah would not be limited to this land distribution. The many generations to come would see a progressively building blessing upon this tribe. Judah would be the tribe identified with the royal line of kings beginning with kings David and Solomon. The tribe of Judah would later develop into the people we now identify as the Jews because of the pronunciation of the name Judah. Finally, and of greatest significance, from the tribe of Judah would arise the Messiah, God's chosen One, Jesus, the descendant of David.

15:13-14 - "According to the commandment of the LORD to Joshua, he gave to Caleb the son of Jephunneh a portion among the people of Judah, Kiriath-arba, that is, Hebron (Arba was the father of Anak). And Caleb drove out from there the three sons of Anak, Sheshai and Ahiman and Talmi, the descendants of Anak."

We saw in the previous chapter that Caleb, of the tribe of Judah, requested and was given by the Lord a portion of the inheritance of Judah containing the city of Hebron. This region was a stronghold of Canaanite resistance and presented a special challenge because of the three sons of Anak. These three sons were giants like their father and had for a generation had maintained their hold on this area. Forty five years before this, when the twelve spies scouted the land at the direction of Moses these three were already there. "So they went up and spied out the land from the wilderness of Zin to Rehob, near Lebo-hamath. They went up into the Negeb and came to Hebron. Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmi, the descendants of Anak, were there. (Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.)" (Numbers 13:21-22). These three fearsome giants were a cause for great fear for ten of the twelve spies which resulted in Israel fearfully disbelieving the Lord and being led into the forty year wilderness journey as punishment from the Lord. Now, a generation later, it is fitting for the Lord to give this same portion of land to one of the two original spies that had trusted Him for their conquest. Caleb did what he had insisted Israel was well able to do with the Lord's help. He drove the three sons of Anak from their strongholds and conquered Hebron for the Lord and Israel.

15:16-19 - "And Caleb said, "Whoever strikes Kiriath-sepher and captures it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter as wife." And Othniel the son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb, captured it. And he gave him Achsah his daughter as wife. When she came to him, she urged him to ask her father for a field. And she got off her donkey, and Caleb said to her, "What do you want?" She said to him, "Give me a blessing. Since you have given me the land of the Negeb, give me also springs of water." And he gave her the upper springs and the lower springs."

Caleb did not personally conquer every portion of the land that was given to him by the Lord. As the leader of his family, Caleb issued a call to any man in his family to lead the conquest of the city of Kiriath-sepher, another stronghold in the region. Othniel, who was the nephew of Caleb accepted Caleb's call and led a victorious assault on the city. In doing so, Othniel also won the privilege of marrying the daughter of Caleb. We can see from the roles that Caleb, Othniel, and Achsah, the daughter of Caleb all play in this story that marriage was more than only a romantic union in Israelite culture. This marriage displayed principles of faith, courage, honor, value, responsibility and cultural position more than it did romance. Othniel will come to the forefront again as the first judge of Israel in the period of the book of Judges after Joshua's death. "But when the people of Israel cried out to the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer for the people of Israel, who saved them, Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother." (Judges 3:9).

15:63 - "But the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the people of Judah could not drive out, so the Jebusites dwell with the people of Judah at Jerusalem to this day."

On the northern border of the territory assigned to Judah, between the tribal portions of Benjamin and Judah was a Jebusite city that would later become the focal point of the history of Israel. The city of Jerusalem would become the capital city of Judah and all Israel under the rule of King David. At this time however, it was a Jebusite stronghold. We read here, and we will read in a later chapter that both the tribes of Judah and Benjamin who shared the responsibility to conquer Jerusalem, failed in that responsibility. The text tells us that the people of Judah could not drive them out. This does not mean that it was an actual impossibility to conquer the city, but that they failed to do what they should have done. It's true that Jerusalem was a special challenge, but the example of Caleb should have instructed the heart of every man of Judah that with faith, none of the cities of Canaan were too difficult to conquer and settle. The implication of this passage is that some from Judah attempted to conquer Jerusalem, but when they faced stiffer opposition than they anticipated, rather than seeking the Lord for His wisdom and help, they simply left the city unconquered and turned their attention to easier areas. The lesson for believers today should be obvious. God gives us some responsibilities that are difficult to accomplish and require faith and persistence to see through to completion.

Giving up and settling for easier accomplishments is always an option, just not a good one. God is most glorified when we trust Him to fully accomplish all He assigns to us.

Joshua 16

16:1-5 - "The allotment of the people of Joseph went from the Jordan by Jericho, east of the waters of Jericho, into the wilderness, going up from Jericho into the hill country to Bethel. Then going from Bethel to Luz, it passes along to Ataroth, the territory of the Archites. Then it goes down westward to the territory of the Japhletites, as far as the territory of Lower Beth-horon, then to Gezer, and it ends at the sea. The people of Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim, received their inheritance. The territory of the people of Ephraim by their clans was as follows: the boundary of their inheritance on the east was Ataroth-addar as far as Upper Beth-horon,"

The second tribe to receive its portion of the Promised Land was the tribe of Joseph. They received a large parcel of land in the middle of Canaan, to the north of Judah and Jerusalem. While Joseph was given its inheritance as a single tribe of the twelve original tribes, the Lord had promised through Jacob to make both of the sons of Joseph tribes of Israel. Since Levi would receive no territory for their inheritance, the extra portion would be given to Joseph and subdivided between his two sons' families; Manasseh and Ephraim. We see another display of the sovereignty of God in the distribution of the inheritance to Joseph. Manasseh was the older of the two sons and normally would be given their portion of the inheritance first. However, when Joshua divided the land, Ephraim received its portion before Manasseh as the Lord honored the pattern of reversed blessing established hundreds of years before by Jacob when he blessed the two sons of Joseph at his death. Remember that Joseph had brought his sons to Jacob to receive a blessing from him, and Jacob had purposefully crossed his hands to place the greater blessing of the right hand upon the head of the younger son, Ephraim. Joseph even attempted to correct what he thought was his father's mistake, but Jacob insisted that the blessing would remain as he had given it. "So he blessed them that day, saying, "By you Israel will pronounce blessings, saying, 'God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh.'" Thus he put Ephraim before Manasseh." (Genesis 48:20). In the same way, the blessing of our eternal inheritance is determined by the sovereign choice of God, not by any natural qualification of the one who receives that blessing.

16:10 - "However, they did not drive out the Canaanites who lived in Gezer, so the Canaanites have lived in the midst of Ephraim to this day but have been made to do forced labor."

In the previous chapter we saw that while the tribe of Judah was largely successful in conquering and settling their portion of the Promised Land, they did leave one important pocket of Canaanite resistance when they failed to take the Jebusite city of Jerusalem. Here, we see that the tribe of Joseph follows a similar pattern in their own responsibility to possess their portion of the land. Throughout their region, the tribe of Joseph established full control over the land with the notable exception of the city of Gezer. We are not given any further detail here as to why this particular city was not conquered. We can be certain though that the decision they made in this case was a result of a spiritual compromise on their part. The Lord was exceedingly clear that each tribe was to fully drive out all the previous inhabitants of the land within the boundaries of their assigned inheritance. In the city of Gezer, the tribe of Joseph instead allowed the Canaanites to live and made them forced laborers to serve them. This might have been because it seemed more trouble than it was worth to complete the conquest of Gezer. It might have been because it seemed to make economic sense to leave some Canaanites to do heavy labor for them. Whatever Joseph was thinking and whatever rationale their leaders applied in this decision, it was a foolish choice. We will see in later accounts that this region will remain a problem for Israel all the way until the time of King David. The lesson here is that when the Lord gives us a hard command, we should anticipate the rise of reasons and excuses occurring to us to convince us that some other option than the clear command of the Lord is preferable. There is never a good enough reason to disobey the Lord.

Joshua 17

17:3-4 - "Now Zelophehad the son of Hopher, son of Gilead, son of Machir, son of Manasseh, had no sons, but only daughters, and these are the names of his daughters: Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. They approached Eleazar the priest and Joshua the son of Nun and the leaders and said, "The LORD commanded Moses to give us an inheritance along with our brothers." So according to the mouth of the LORD he gave them an inheritance among the brothers of their father."

Years before, the daughters of Zelophehad had approached Moses to make a wise and respectful appeal for inheritance rights (Numbers 27:1-11). Their father had died and there were no sons to take the lead in representing the family. Moses sought the Lord on their behalf and was directed by the Lord to honor their request. Their case became a pattern for a law protecting the inheritance rights of all women in Israel in a similar circumstance. Now, the time had come

for the promise of the Lord through Moses to be fulfilled. In the distribution for the tribe of Manasseh, the daughters of Zelophehad approached Eleazar the high priest and Joshua with the same respectful, but bold attitude that had characterized their request to Moses years before. This time they were not so much asking as they were reminding. The promise had already been given to them. The Lord had already spoken on this and His word was Law. Now, these five women of faith boldly reminded the leaders of Israel of the promise of God to them. Their faith and reliance upon the word of the Lord was rewarded with the inheritance among the families of Manasseh. Their example also will serve as an important contrast with the group requesting an increase in their inheritance later in this same chapter.

17:12-13 - "Yet the people of Manasseh could not take possession of those cities, but the Canaanites persisted in dwelling in that land. Now when the people of Israel grew strong, they put the Canaanites to forced labor, but did not utterly drive them out."

This is now the third time in the last three chapters when one of the leading tribes of Israel was faced with completing the conquest of their allotted portion of land and found themselves hindered by the strength of the opposition by the Canaanites in that region. First it was the tribe of Judah that left the city of Jerusalem unconquered. Next it was the tribe of Ephraim that failed to drive out the Canaanites from the city of Gezer. Now, the tribe of Manasseh leave several cities unconquered. Again, like the previous accounts, the description of why they did not conquer these cities is subject to misunderstanding. The text tells us that "Manasseh could not take possession of those cities..." The description is meant to provoke a question in our minds. Why could they not conquer those cities? Was the tribe of Manasseh too weak or too few for such a challenging task? Were their weapons insufficient? Did they not have the right military strategy? None of these possible answers identify the real reason why these cities were unconquered.

The only additional information we are given is that the Canaanites in those cities "persisted". The word indicates a stubborn resistance on the part of these Canaanites to the intentions of the Manassehites. In other words, the men of Manasseh conquered most of their territory wherever the resistance of the inhabitants was relatively weak and easy to conquer. As soon as they encountered stiff resistance in these cities the Israelites backed off. As we saw in the previous two examples, this decision to leave these cities unconquered was made in disobedience and a failure to obey the Lord in their toughest challenge. Anyone can obey the Lord when faced with easy circumstances that neither test their character or faith. As believers, we should expect for the Lord to assign us some tough challenges that will test our faith and obedience. When those challenging tests come, don't back off like the tribe of Manasseh. Those are the times we must press in with obedience and faith.

17:14-18 - "Then the people of Joseph spoke to Joshua, saying, "Why have you given me but one lot and one portion as an inheritance, although I am a numerous people, since all along the LORD has blessed me?" And Joshua said to them, "If you are a numerous people, go up by yourselves to the forest, and there clear ground for yourselves in the land of the Perizzites and the Rephaim, since the hill country of Ephraim is too narrow for you." The people of Joseph said, "The hill country is not enough for us. Yet all the Canaanites who dwell in the plain have chariots of iron, both those in Beth-shean and its villages and those in the Valley of Jezreel." Then Joshua said to the house of Joseph, to Ephraim and Manasseh, "You are a numerous people and have great power. You shall not have one allotment only, but the hill country shall be yours, for though it is a forest, you shall clear it and possess it to its farthest borders. For you shall drive out the Canaanites, though they have chariots of iron, and though they are strong."

The united tribe of Joseph including both Ephraim and Manasseh now approach Joshua with a serious complaint. They complain that they were given a portion of land too small for their real needs. They insinuate that Joshua bears responsibility for this issue, and while they do not directly accuse the Lord of being unfair to them, their complaint also implicates the Lord. Remember the portions of land in the tribal inheritance division was determined by casting lots by the command of the Lord. We saw that this was not a random lottery of arbitrary chance, but an expression of the Lord's sovereign choice for each tribe. It would take faith for each tribe to trust that the portion of land assigned to them from the lot was the portion that God had determined for them to possess. The leaders of the tribe of Joseph are not trusting in the Lord's provision for them here, but questioning in an unhealthy way the decision of the Lord. They were unsatisfied with what the Lord had given to them and felt that they deserved more and should be given more.

Joshua's answer to this challenge is wise and convicting to the leaders of the tribe of Joseph. Joshua does not bother to defend himself from their insinuation of unfairness. He does not even attempt to defend the Lord's decision to give them this portion. Instead, Joshua uses their own words to remind them of the real issue, which was their failure to handle their own responsibility as a tribe. In their complaint, the leaders of Joseph stated that they were too numerous for their portion of land because of the great blessing of the Lord. Joshua's answer was piercing in its discernment. He replied that if the Lord had blessed them so greatly, and made them so numerous, then they had more than enough strength and numbers to complete the conquest of their own territory. In acknowledging their reluctance to conquer the cities, Joshua directed their attention to the hill country. He told them that they could clear the hill country of its forest land and settle there. Of course, to clear hill country of a forest would require very hard work, and Joseph was looking for an easier solution. They objected that even if they cleared the hills that they would still need the land in the plains. The only problem was that the plains were the place where the unconquered cities of the

Canaanites stood. The leaders were reduced to whining at this point as they described the powerful chariots of iron of the Canaanites.

Joshua was not moved by their complaint or their timid description of the strength of the Canaanites. Joshua had heard a similar fearful description forty five years before when his fellow spies had claimed that the Canaanites were too strong to be conquered. The bottom line here was that this was only an excuse for not doing what the Lord had commanded. Joshua does not engage in a debate or even any further discussion with the leaders of the tribe of Joseph. He gives them a direct and final answer to their complaining request for more land. His answer contains elements of both rebuke for their previous unbelief and unfaithfulness, and an encouragement for them to lay hold with courage and faith of the promise of God to cause them to possess their land. He reminded them that their numbers were not a problem, but a blessing. They were to recognize their strength and it was the Lord's assignment to them both to clear out the forest in the hill country, and to drive out the Canaanites in the plains no matter how much resistance they may encounter.

Questions from Joshua 16:

Question: Is it still effective today about blessing the eldest in the family?

Answer: This is a question that I have to answer both yes and no. I'll explain the no part first. The special blessings we see in the Scriptures given by Abraham to Isaac, Isaac to Jacob, and Jacob to Judah and Ephraim are covenant blessings which God chose to give to those individuals through their fathers in order to carry the blessing of the covenant over to the next generation. This aspect of special blessing was ultimately fulfilled in Christ. Jesus received from the Father the fullness of this special blessing of the most favored Son. Believers in Christ also partake of this blessing through faith in Christ alone. The yes part of your question is that it is still a wise practice for believing parents to pray for their children and to provide blessings for them in an inheritance. The parents may distribute their inheritance to their children as God leads them for His purpose in each child's life. However, as we see from today's study, and other Biblical examples, the eldest does not always receive the larger portion. It was a cultural pattern in those days for the eldest to receive a double portion because they were expected to take over the head of the family responsibilities. There were exceptions where the Lord chose a younger son to assume the responsibility of the family due to character weaknesses in the older son.

Joshua 18

18:1 - "Then the whole congregation of the people of Israel assembled at Shiloh and set up the tent of meeting there. The land lay subdued before them."

This verse marks an important turning point for Israel. Ever since Exodus chapter 40, the nation of Israel had lived a nomadic life centered around the tabernacle as the house of the Lord was moved from location to location. Now the tabernacle, the tent of meeting, was moved to the city of Shiloh and established there. This move would be the last time the tabernacle would be moved until the days of David when he brought it up to Jerusalem as its permanent home. The new location at Shiloh was chosen by the Lord and accomplished both a spiritual purpose as well as a practical one.

The spiritual significance of this move was tied to the meaning of the name Shiloh. It is a Hebrew word meaning rest. The tabernacle of the Lord had come to rest in Shiloh. This pointed to the fulfillment of the Lord's promise to give His people rest in the Promised Land. Even though there were some remaining pockets of resistance throughout Canaan, "the land lay subdued before them" now. The move to Shiloh signaled that the conquest of Canaan was now accomplished and the Lord and His people could rest. It is symbolically tied to the pattern established in the original week of creation. In the creation week the Lord worked on days one through six. Then, on the seventh day, when His work was finished, He rested. The Lord resting in Shiloh signifies that the conquest of the Promised Land was in a sense a new creation work of the Lord, in which He was doing a new work in the earth toward the fulfillment of His great purpose. The rest at the end of this new work indicates that the work is finished and a new era is beginning.

The practical element in the choice of Shiloh as the location for the tabernacle in the early history of Israel in the Promised Land was that it was a central place accessible to both the northern and southern tribes. All of Israel was required by the Law of God to present themselves before the Lord at the tabernacle three times a year. Shiloh was a perfect choice which each tribe could reach without undue hardship. Later in history, when the nation was divided into a northern kingdom of ten tribes, and a southern kingdom of two tribes, the tabernacle had been moved to the south in Jerusalem. The southern location in Jerusalem would then be central to the southern kingdom of Judah which remained for the most part loyal to the Lord and continued to worship at the temple even after the northern tribes fell away from the Lord and ceased seeking the Lord at His temple.

18:2-3 - "There remained among the people of Israel seven tribes whose inheritance had not yet been apportioned. So Joshua said to the people of Israel, "How long will you put off going in to take possession of the land, which the LORD, the God of your fathers, has given you?"

The two and one half tribes that were given land on the eastern shore of the Jordan River are already situated in their territory now. Judah, Ephraim and Manasseh are settled in their portions in the Promised Land. That leaves seven tribes (six full tribes and half of the tribe of Manasseh) still unsettled in their own territories. Once the tabernacle was moved to Shiloh, and was at rest there, it was only right for all the people of God to follow the example of the Lord and find their own place of rest in their portion of the Promised Land. Joshua addresses the remaining tribes at this point and directs a stinging word of exhortation to them. His words clearly imply that the reason that they were not yet settled in their own territory was their own fault. "How long will you put off going in to take possession of the land, which the LORD, the God of your fathers, has given you?"

In what way had these remaining tribes put off going in to take possession of the land? We can identify their issue as passive procrastination. As their brothers in the other five tribes had each taken possession of their own territory and settled the land, their own hearts should have been stirred to approach Joshua and at least ask when their turn would come. Instead of actively seeking the fulfillment of what the Lord had promised to them, they seemed satisfied to wait until the Lord simply dropped their territory into their laps. However, this word from Joshua, representing the Lord, indicates that He was not going to drop their portion into their laps apart from their active involvement. It was His purpose for them to stir themselves to send surveyors throughout the rest of Canaan and then to rise up and take possession of the portion that fell to them by the lot of the Lord.

There is a principle here that applies to our spiritual lives. God has made many wonderful promises to us in Christ. We are not to consider these promises of God passively, but by faith, we are meant to actively lay hold of the promises of God and seek Him for their fulfillment in our lives. "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, ..." (II Peter 1:3-5).

18:11 - "The lot of the tribe of the people of Benjamin according to its clans came up, and the territory allotted to it fell between the people of Judah and the people of Joseph."

Of the seven remaining tribes to take possession of their inheritance, Benjamin was the smallest, but most significant in regard to future purpose. Their territory was marked out between Judah to the south and Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh) to the north. Benjamin's portion included the city of Jebus, which would later be renamed Jerusalem and become the most significant city in Israel as its spiritual and political capital. Benjamin would also be the tribe from which the first of the kings of Israel, King Saul, would be selected (I Samuel 9:21). Another famous son of the tribe of Benjamin appointed by the Lord for great purpose would be Saul of Tarsus, who would become Paul the Apostle (Philippians 3:5).

Joshua 19

19:1, 9 - "The second lot came out for Simeon, for the tribe of the people of Simeon, according to their clans, and their inheritance was in the midst of the inheritance of the people of Judah..."

The inheritance of the people of Simeon formed part of the territory of the people of Judah. Because the portion of the people of Judah was too large for them, the people of Simeon obtained an inheritance in the midst of their inheritance."

Simeon was the next tribe given its inheritance in the lot. As the second born son of Jacob, Simeon would have been the second tribe named in the inheritance assignments, but they have dropped way down the list due to special circumstances. Not only did Simeon lose their place in the order of tribal inheritance, but they also lost their right to a full territory of their own in the Promised Land. We see here that Simeon is given a place to settle, but their portion was not actually their own, but a smaller section of the land already assigned to Judah. The Lord had honored Judah with the rights to a larger section of the Promised Land than they were able to settle. Now, the Lord carves out a sub-section of Judah's land and gives it to the tribe of Simeon. The Lord could have done this separately, but by taking Simeon's portion from Judah's inheritance, He fulfills the prophetic word of Jacob when he pronounced this judgment upon Simeon at his death.

"Simeon and Levi are brothers; weapons of violence are their swords. Let my soul come not into their council; O my glory, be not joined to their company. For in their anger they killed men, and in their willfulness they hamstrung oxen. Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce, and their wrath, for it is cruel! I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel." (Genesis 49:5-7). Because of the sin of

Simeon and Levi in the destruction of Shechem, both tribes permanently lost their right to possess their own territory in the Promised Land. Levi later was restored to a greater blessing as the priestly tribe that would be given cities in every territory in Israel because they were the one tribe that rallied to the side of Moses in the golden calf incident in the wilderness. Simeon also lost their portion of land and now they receive only a few cities within the territory of Judah to settle.

The lesson we can gain from Simeon is that the Lord evaluates our choices and actions. The blessings He promises for faithfulness and obedience should not be taken lightly, and the consequences of disobedience can be far reaching. Paul refers to this same principle in the New Testament when he teaches us that on the final day of judgment our lives will be evaluated by the Lord. For those who are saved by Christ, this will not be an evaluation of salvation, but of eternal reward. Faithfulness and obedience will be rewarded forever. However, the rewards on that day are not automatic. Rewards can be gained, but they can also be lost.

"Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw-- each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire." (1 Corinthians 3:12-15).

19:47 - "When the territory of the people of Dan was lost to them, the people of Dan went up and fought against Leshem, and after capturing it and striking it with the sword they took possession of it and settled in it, calling Leshem, Dan, after the name of Dan their ancestor."

The story of the conquest and settlement of the Promised Land is not a story of consistent victory and triumph by all twelve tribes of Israel. We have seen that the response of the tribes to the call of the Lord to go in and fully possess the land was mixed. The tribe of Dan was the least successful of all the tribes in fulfilling their responsibility. Dan was given a specific portion of land by the Lord in the far south of the Promised Land. They entered that portion and began to settle it, but failed to defeat the Amorites that dwelt there. A description from Judges tells us that Dan was hemmed in by the Amorites in the hill country. "The Amorites pressed the people of Dan back into the hill country, for they did not allow them to come down to the plain." (Judges 1:34). Dan eventually lost all motivation to take their own territory and abandoned it completely. They migrated as a tribe to the north and eventually settled in the city of Leshem, which they renamed, Dan. While they must have been happy to finally have a portion of land that they had conquered and settled, this was ultimately a defeat for them and no victory to celebrate. It was a defeat, because they conquered land that the Lord had not assigned to them, and left unconquered the land that the Lord had

assigned to them. In the same way, the Lord has given to each of us, our own assignments in His kingdom. We will be judged by Him, not on what we accomplished where we did not belong, but what we accomplished in what He had assigned for us to do.

19:49-50 - "When they had finished distributing the several territories of the land as inheritances, the people of Israel gave an inheritance among them to Joshua the son of Nun. By command of the LORD they gave him the city that he asked, Timnath-serah in the hill country of Ephraim. And he rebuilt the city and settled in it."

After the last of the twelve tribes had received their inheritance of land, all the tribes agreed to give an entire city to Joshua as his own inheritance. This is one of two exceptional blessings given in the distribution of the Promised Land. The other exception was to Joshua's old partner, Caleb. These two men were the only two to survive from the original generation that left Egypt and made the forty year wilderness journey. They survived, not by coincidence, but because they were the only two of that first generation to believe God when He told them to enter into the Promised Land and conquer it. Their faith in the Lord was rewarded by living through the entire experience, and now by receiving their own city as a personal inheritance for their family's future. This blessing for Joshua is an important contrast to the experience of Simeon and Dan from earlier in this chapter. We see contrasted in their circumstances the consequences unfaithfulness with the blessings of faith and obedience.

Joshua 20

20:1-5 - "Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Say to the people of Israel, 'Appoint the cities of refuge, of which I spoke to you through Moses, that the manslayer who strikes any person without intent or unknowingly may flee there. They shall be for you a refuge from the avenger of blood. He shall flee to one of these cities and shall stand at the entrance of the gate of the city and explain his case to the elders of that city. Then they shall take him into the city and give him a place, and he shall remain with them. And if the avenger of blood pursues him, they shall not give up the manslayer into his hand, because he struck his neighbor unknowingly, and did not hate him in the past.'"

Before Israel entered the Promised Land, the Lord gave Moses instructions for the establishment of six special cities throughout Israel. They were known as the cities of refuge. They provided a haven for manslayers. This was not an inconsistency with the strict requirement elsewhere in the Law of God to execute with the death penalty anyone who committed the crime of murder. A manslayer fit the category we still maintain in modern law of what is now called

manslaughter. The manslayer law recognized the seriousness of causing the death of another human being, but purposefully shielded the manslayer from the death penalty required for murder. God's Law in the sixth of the Ten Commandments is still commonly mistranslated and misunderstood as "You shall not kill." The Law did not prohibit all killing, but it did prohibit and punish with the death penalty all occurrences of murder.

The distinction between killing and murder is one of motive and heart intent. A murderer commits their crime with a wicked heart motive of hatred, greed, envy, jealousy, etc. It was possible to kill in certain circumstances without any wicked motive, such as in self defense, in warfare, and in the execution of God's justice. This law for the manslayer specifically addressed inadvertent killing such as happened when one person unintentionally caused the death of another. In these cases, the responsible person would become the target of the avenger of blood. The avenger of blood was a near kinsman of the slain person that would be appointed by the family of the slain person. Their charge was to seek out the one responsible for the death of their kinsmen and to execute God's justice upon them. These six cities of refuge were provided by the Lord as a safe place for the manslayer to flee.

As the manslayer arrived at the gates of one of the six cities of refuge they were to announce themselves to the elders of the city and describe their case to them. It was the responsibility of the elders to evaluate and discern the story of the manslayer and determine whether they should be granted refuge in the city. The elders had to evaluate the heart motives of the manslayer. This is similar in modern criminal law to the standard of determining whether the one who has killed has done so with "malice aforethought." The elders were the one to make this decision because it required wisdom and discernment to identify the real motives of the person's heart. The elders were considered to be the wisest people in each city. Once granted refuge, the manslayer was protected from the avenger of blood by the city. Each avenger of blood was required to honor the decision of the elders of the city. The law required the manslayer to remain within the boundaries of the city for safety, and if the manslayer chose to leave the safety of the city, then the avenger of blood was free to renew their pursuit of justice.

20:6 - "And he shall remain in that city until he has stood before the congregation for judgment, until the death of him who is high priest at the time. Then the manslayer may return to his own town and his own home, to the town from which he fled."

There was an interesting requirement attached to the law of the cities of refuge. Once the manslayer entered the city for refuge, they were to remain there as a permanent resident of the city until the death of the current high priest of Israel. This requirement clearly established the law as spiritual in nature and not a simple social code. The high priest in Israel was a living symbol of the great work

of salvation that would one day be accomplished by Christ. It was only at the death of the high priest that the manslayer was free to return to his original home without fear of retribution by the avenger of blood. In the same way, our own freedom is tied to the death of our high priest Jesus.

20:7-9 - "So they set apart Kedesh in Galilee in the hill country of Naphtali, and Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim, and Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the hill country of Judah. And beyond the Jordan east of Jericho, they appointed Bezer in the wilderness on the tableland, from the tribe of Reuben, and Ramoth in Gilead, from the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan, from the tribe of Manasseh. These were the cities designated for all the people of Israel and for the stranger sojourning among them, that anyone who killed a person without intent could flee there, so that he might not die by the hand of the avenger of blood, till he stood before the congregation."

The six cities of refuge were named from the larger group of cities set apart for the Levites throughout Israel as identified in Joshua 21. Three of the six refuge cities were located on the eastern side of the Jordan River, and three of the cities were located on the western side of the river. The layout of the relative locations of the six cities provided an accessible refuge for every person in Israel no matter which territory of the twelve tribes in which they settled. For instance on the western side, there was one city in the northern territory, one in the central portion of the land, and one in the south. The same was the case for the three cities on the eastern side. The result was that a person could reach the closest city of refuge in less than two days travel no matter where they started in Israel. This was a practical expression of the justice and mercy of God for His people.