

“The Promised Land”
 Joshua 13-19
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I've been thinking that if we started Joshua in October of last year and we have studied just less than ½ of the book thus far six months later and if we take two months out for our summer series, it will be November or December before we finish Joshua.

It leads me to wonder if we could have lived the events in real time as quickly as we have studied it?

But, good news, today we will cover nearly a third of the book at one time.

When I look at this next section of the book of Joshua I see list after list of city names and geographical locations.

Note for example Joshua 15:20ff:

Joshua 15:20-32 “This is the inheritance of the tribe of Judah, clan by clan: The southernmost towns of the tribe of Judah in the Negev toward the boundary of Edom were: Kabzeel, Eder, Jagur, Kinah, Dimonah, Adadah, Kedesh, Hazor, Ithnan, Ziph, Telem, Bealoth, Hazor Hadattah, Kerioth Hezron (that is, Hazor), Amam, Shema, Moladah, Hazar Gaddah, Heshmon, Beth Pelet, Hazar Shual, Beersheba, Biziothiah, Baalah, Iim, Ezem, Eltolad, Kesil, Hormah, Ziklag, Madmannah, Sansannah, Lebaoth, Shilhim, Ain and Rimmon--a total of twenty-nine towns and their villages.”

I read that list and I ask does 2 Timothy 3:16-17 really mean “all” Scripture?

2 Timothy 3:16-17 “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

I say this so you will have sympathy for me as I try to teach from this text and patience with me as you try to listen.

I could have covered this long section by selecting a couple of shorter passages from within this longer section and preaching them – as I will do in coming weeks.

But I wanted you to see that the whole section (all 8 chapters together), as a whole section, with all its detail, teaches us some important truths.

This idea of looking at a long text as a whole might be helpful to you in your own reading of other portions of the Bible.

When, in your reading, you come to a rather, dare I say, “tedious” section of the Older Testament Law or the genealogies of either the Older or Newer Testaments, it is tempting to either skip them or simply look for “gems” in their midst.

But you might also look at the section as a whole and ask, “Why did the author and the Spirit of God include all this detail?”

That is what I will do with you today as we look at this long section of Joshua.

First of all I want you to think of chapters 13-20 in the context of the entire book of Joshua:

- **Joshua 1-4 God leads them into the land** (Crossing of the Jordan River and preparation for conquest.)
- **Joshua 5-12 God enables them to conquer the land** (The battles of Jericho, Ai, southern campaign and northern campaign)
- **Joshua 13-20 God commands them to divide the land** (We’re actually going to look at chapters 13-19 today because I’m going to speak to chapter 20 in a later sermon)
- **Joshua 21-24 God instructs them through Joshua’s final words.**

We will not read the eight chapters but I do ask you to look at a brief outline of what is included in chapters 13-19.

The first section is the instruction to allocate land:

Joshua 13:6b-8 God says to Joshua, “Be sure to allocate this land (west of the Jordan) to Israel for an inheritance, as I have instructed you, and divide it as an inheritance among the nine tribes and half of the tribe of Manasseh. The other half of Manasseh, the Reubenites and the Gadites had received the inheritance that Moses had given them east of the Jordan...”

Before going further with the outline it seems appropriate to ask, “What does the author mean by ‘tribes’ and who are these people with, to us, the strange sounding names: Manasseh, Gadites, etc.?”

A “tribe” as we know from our own Native American tribes (Cherokee, Apache, Sioux, etc) simply refers to a specific group of closely related people.

In Joshua’s day those tribes were the hundreds of thousands of people descended over 400 years from the 12 sons of Jacob.

The nation of Israel was not first of all a reference to geography but to a people – the people whose common forefather was Jacob the grandson of Abraham.

That Jacob had 12 sons:

- 1.Reuben
- 2.Simeon
- 3.Levi
- 4.Judah
- 5.Dan
- 6.Naphtali
- 7.Gad
- 8.Asher
- 9.Issachar
- 10.Zebulun
- 11.Joseph (Ephraim and Mannaseh)
- 12.Benjamin

The descendants of those 12 sons over the 400 years from Abraham/Isaac/Jacob to Moses and Joshua are the “tribes” we are talking about.

While we will not discuss it today, descendants of the 3rd born son, Levi, were not granted land but became the priests of the nation.

In order to still have the number 12, two portions of the land are given to the descendants of Joseph – the eleventh but favorite son of Jacob.

So the 12 tribes are 10 sons and two grandsons of Jacob.

Now back to the outline: The second section of this passage is the **review of the allocations East of the Jordan:**

The people called Reuben, the descendants of the oldest son, had asked for land on the east side of the Jordan, in what is now the country of Jordan, and had been granted it by Moses even before the book of Joshua opens.

Joshua 13:15 “This is what Moses had given to the tribe of Reuben, clan by clan:

Gad The descendants of Gad had likewise requested and been granted land east of the Jordan.

Joshua 13:24 “This is what Moses had given to the tribe of Gad, clan by clan:

East Manasseh And likewise, ½ of the descendants of Manasseh had been given land east of the Jordan in what is now Jordan and Syria.

Joshua 13:29 “This is what Moses had given to the half-tribe of Manasseh, that is, to half the family of the descendants of Manasseh, clan by clan:

Having reviewed the allocation of land east of the Jordan, we turn our attention to the 9 ½ tribes west of the Jordan.

Allocations to the 9 ½ tribes west of the Jordan:

Joshua 14:1-4 “Now these are the areas the Israelites received as an inheritance in the land of Canaan, which Eleazar the priest, Joshua son of Nun and the heads of the tribal clans of Israel allotted to them. ² Their inheritances were assigned by lot to the nine-and-a-half tribes, as the LORD had commanded through Moses. ³ Moses had granted the two-and-a-half tribes their inheritance east of the Jordan but had not granted the

Levites an inheritance among the rest, ⁴ for the sons of Joseph had become two tribes--Manasseh and Ephraim.

**And what follows is the allocation of land to three of the tribes:
Judah**

Joshua 15:1 "The allotment for the tribe of Judah, clan by clan..."

Ephraim

Joshua 16:5 "This was the territory of Ephraim, clan by clan:

Manasseh

Joshua 17:1 "This was the allotment for the tribe of Manasseh as Joseph's firstborn..."

But seven tribes still didn't have land and so the next section is about them and how the decisions were to be made:

Method for allotting land to the remaining seven tribes:

Joshua 18:1-6,10 "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 fathers, has given you? 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 house of Joseph in its 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..." 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.

What follows are the descriptions of the allotments to the remaining seven tribes:

Benjamin

Joshua 18:11 “The lot came up for the tribe of Benjamin, clan by clan...”

Simeon

Joshua 19:1 “The second lot came out for the tribe of Simeon, clan by clan.

Zebulun

Joshua 19:10 “The third lot came up for Zebulun, clan by clan:”

Issachar

Joshua 19:17 “The fourth lot came out for Issachar, clan by clan.”

Asher

Joshua 19:24 “The fifth lot came out for the tribe of Asher, clan by clan.

Naphtali

Joshua 19:32 “The sixth lot came out for Naphtali, clan by clan:”

Dan

Joshua 19:40 “The seventh lot came out for the tribe of Dan, clan by clan.”

And the long section ends with a conclusion:**Conclusion**

Joshua 19:51 “These are the territories that Eleazar the priest, Joshua son of Nun and the heads of the tribal clans of Israel assigned by lot at Shiloh in the presence of the LORD at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. **And so they finished dividing the land.**”

Now back to our question: **Why is over a third of the book given to the distribution of the land and why such detail?**

I suggest to you four practical truths demonstrated by this long and detailed section of Joshua:

1. God keeps his promises.

The detail of these chapters dramatically demonstrates that God fulfills every one of his promises and does so down right down to the smallest issue.

Possessing the land was what 500 years of history had been leading up to.

From Genesis 12 to Joshua 12, for 500 years, the story of the Bible is that God's people will be given a land.

Not just any people but this specific people.

And not just any land but this specific land.

And in Joshua 13-19 we have that specific land finally given to those specific people.

Consistent with last week's sermon from Joshua 11, we see that God keeps his promises no matter how long it takes.

I want you to see just a couple of examples of how **specific** the promise and fulfillment are:

Nearly 500 years before, Jacob nearing death, had prophesied regarding his sons.

He spoke of the priority that the descendants of Judah would have in the generations to come.

Genesis 49:8 "Judah, your brothers will praise you;
your hand will be on the neck of your enemies;
your father's sons will bow down to you.

When we study the allocation of land to the descendants of Judah 500 years later we see that Judah is the first one mentioned on the west side of the Jordan, the heart of the Promised Land and the amount and location of the land demonstrate the preeminent place that Judah gets.

Another example: 500 years earlier in Genesis 48, when Jacob was blessing his grandsons, Joseph appropriately placed the eldest son, Manasseh on Jacob's right to receive the greater blessing.

But that old and blind Jacob intentionally crossed his arms placing his right hand on the younger son, Ephraim's head.

Joseph tried to correct the faux pas but Jacob knew exactly what he was doing.

And then 500 years later the descendants of Ephraim are indeed treated with priority over Manasseh.

And to this day the two tribes are always referred to as Ephraim and Manasseh – the younger referenced first.

In yet another example, in Jacob's blessings of his sons he likewise said that his sons Simeon and Levi would be scattered among the others (Genesis 49:5-7).

And when the land was distributed Simeon received not a distinct portion but a portion within Judah's allocation and Levi was given cities scattered all over Israel.

The author goes to great length to demonstrate that not one detail of God's predictions and promises failed.

Years later Solomon said it this way in 1Kings 8:56 "Not one word has failed of all the good promises he gave through his servant Moses."

When we come to the New Testament, using the small mustard seed as an illustration, Jesus promised that his kingdom, his rule in the world, may have a small beginning but it will expand until it fills the whole earth.

True Christians are still a minority in the world and thus we tend toward thinking of Christianity, as a small, disadvantaged, vulnerable group of people whose only future is that history will one day be over.

We can't imagine the world as different.

We miss the fact that God says we are the forerunners of a great multitude from every tongue and tribe on the earth.

God doesn't call us to be triumphalist but to be expectant.
 God will not fail.
 The Kingdom of Christ will expand on this earth.

And what we see is not all we get.
 Jesus is coming again.
 Judgment will happen.
 A new heaven and new earth will be the eternal
 home of God's people.

God has not failed and he will not fail in any detail of his promises.

2. The second truth I think this lengthy passage demonstrates is that God intends good for his people.

Over the course of 500 years it would have been easy to assume that while the original promise sounded objective and concrete – a real homeland, real peace, real prosperity – maybe instead a land of their own was just a metaphor for a spiritual homeland, spiritual peace, and spiritual prosperity.

But now in the book of Joshua, those many years later, it becomes obvious that God's promises were objective not just subjective.

This was real estate they were getting.
 These were real cities, real places – very specific places.

And God was creating a new society:

The myriad of laws given in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers were not oppressive but freeing - they guided the way people were to treat each other and thus be able to live together and enjoy the life God had given them.

- The land was owned by the people not the kings
- The society was family centered - land adjustments were done every seven years and fifty years.
- Mutual assistance, interest free loans, and mutual defense pacts were what they enjoyed.
- Governance was not to be "top-down" but very mutual under God's direction.

God's blessing were not just general but specific:
 Specific places for specific individuals.

Jeremiah 29:11 "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

Look at the description of our future in Revelation 21:3-4
 "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

We must continually remember that we are not in the "Promised Land" yet.

We have glimpses of the future, we have foretastes of what lays ahead, and we have good and gracious samplings of what will one day be ours.

We are not there yet but most importantly – we will be!
 And it will be concrete, objective, physically real,
 and complete.

God intends good for us; it may, in part, be delayed, but it will come.

This lengthy passage teaches me that God keeps his promises and that God intends good for us.

3. Thirdly, this passage shows me how God carefully preserves his people to accomplish his grand and good purposes:

Back in Genesis 12:3 God said through Abraham God would bless the world.

Genesis 12:3 "I will bless those who bless you,
 and whoever curses you I will curse;
 and all peoples on earth
 will be blessed through you."

I referred earlier to Jacob's prophecy regarding the descendants of his son Judah.

See the rest of that prophecy and then consider what God planned and did through the descendants of Judah:

Genesis 49:10 “The (kings) scepter will not depart from Judah,
nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,
until he comes to whom it belongs
and the obedience of the nations is his.”

Out of Judah would come King David, the greatest of Israel's kings. But even David knew that he was simply a forerunner of another king, unlike any other king, who would be the eternal king of God's people.

And 1000 years later, out of Judah, out of David, came the Messiah – Jesus.

And he, of the tribe of Judah, would be God's means to bless the world.

Acts 4:12 “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.”

This long passage demonstrates how God carefully established the historical and geographical context in which this family of Judah would be preserved for 1500 years until the coming of the Messiah.

This passage teaches us yet a fourth thing:

1. God reveals how cracks lead to chasms.

The cracks of incomplete obedience lead to chasms of trouble, failure and punishment in the future.

Four times over the course of the passage we are told that in the midst of God's blessing the people failed to fully obey.

God had told the Israelites to destroy or drive out the inhabitants of the land.

Israel was God's means of judgment on those people.

And God knew that if they didn't drive them out, in the future those people would overtly attack or covertly corrupt the people of God.

But notice what Israel did instead of fully obeying God:

- Joshua 13:13 “But the Israelites did not drive out the people of Geshur and Maacah, so they continue to live among the Israelites to this day.
- Joshua 15:63 “Judah could not dislodge the Jebusites, who were living in Jerusalem; to this day the Jebusites live there with the people of Judah.
- Joshua 16:10 “They (the Ephraimites) did not dislodge the Canaanites living in Gezer; to this day the Canaanites live among the people of Ephraim but are required to do forced labor.
- Joshua 17:12-13 “Yet the Manassites were not able to occupy these towns, for the Canaanites were determined to live in that region. However, when the Israelites grew stronger, they subjected the Canaanites to forced labor but did not drive them out completely.

The book of Judges, which follows Joshua, and the 1500-year-history of the people down to the time of Jesus, attests to the trouble that this disobedience caused.

Defeat at the hands of enemies, civil war, religious apostasy and eventual collapse resulted from Israel’s failure to completely obey.

Thinking they were wiser and more clever than God, they didn’t drive the inhabitants out but in greediness, made them their slaves.

And the cracks of disobedience became the chasms into which Israel fell.

How many seemingly little things do we leave unattended because we think they can’t possibly matter that much?

How many times do we rationalize a little disobedience on the basis of much obedience? I usually and mostly obey.

Oh, the peril of partial obedience!

Four truths:

1. God is faithful, in every detail, to every promise he makes.
2. God intends good for his people – objective, concrete good – we are not in the Promised Land yet but it will be as physically real as it is spiritual.
3. God preserves his people to accomplish salvation.
4. And lastly, God reveals that full, whole-hearted, obedience is necessary for our good and his glory.

Pray.