

ENTER AT YOUR OWN REST

Studies in the Book of Joshua

"Full blessing in the Christian life is not bestowed except to eager, hungry people who press in to receive it"

Alan Redpath

Text

Joshua 13:7-33 & 14:1-5

Topic

The two and one-half tribes who misspoke asking for land east of the Jordan River receive their inheritance

Title

"The Tribe has Misspoken"

Joshua 13:7 Now therefore, divide this land as an inheritance to the nine tribes and half the tribe of Manasseh."

Joshua 13:8 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:

Joshua 13:9 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;

Joshua 13:10 all the cities of Sihon king of the Amorites, who reigned in Heshbon, as far as the border of the children of Ammon;

Joshua 13:11 Gilead, and the border of the Geshurites and Maachathites, all Mount Hermon, and all Bashan as far as Salcah;

Joshua 13:12 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.

Joshua 13:13 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.

Joshua 13:14 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.

Joshua 13:15 And Moses had given to the tribe of the children of Reuben an inheritance according to their families.

Joshua 13:16 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;

Joshua 13:17 Heshbon and all its cities that are in the plain: Dibon, Bamoth Baal, Beth Baal Meon,

Joshua 13:18 Jahaza, Kedemoth, Mephaath,
Joshua 13:19 Kirjathaim, Sibmah, Zereth Shahar on the mountain of the valley,
Joshua 13:20 Beth Peor, the slopes of Pisgah, and Beth Jeshimoth -
Joshua 13:21 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.
Joshua 13:22 The children of Israel also killed with the sword Balaam the son of Beor, the soothsayer, among those who were killed by them.
Joshua 13:23 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.
Joshua 13:24 Moses also had given an inheritance to the tribe of Gad, to the children of Gad according to their families.
Joshua 13:25 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,
Joshua 13:26 and from Heshbon to Ramath Mizpah and Betonim, and from Mahanaim to the border of Debir,
Joshua 13:27 and 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.
Joshua 13:28 This is the inheritance of the children of Gad according to their families, the cities and their villages.
Joshua 13:29 Moses 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:
Joshua 13:30 Their 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;
Joshua 13:31 half 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.
Joshua 13:32 These 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.
Joshua 13:33 But to the tribe of Levi Moses had given no inheritance; the Lord God of Israel was their inheritance, as He had said to them.
Joshua 14:1 These are the areas which the children of Israel inherited in the land of Canaan, which Eleazar the priest, Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel distributed as an inheritance to them.
Joshua 14:2 Their inheritance was by lot, as the Lord had commanded by the hand of Moses, for the nine tribes and the half-tribe.
Joshua 14:3 For Moses had given the inheritance of the two tribes and the half-tribe on the other side of the Jordan; but to the Levites he had given no inheritance among them.
Joshua 14:4 For the children of Joseph were two tribes: Manasseh and Ephraim. And they gave no part to the Levites in the land, except cities to dwell in, with their commons for their livestock and their property.

Joshua 14:5 As the Lord had commanded Moses, so the children of Israel did; and they divided the land.

Introduction

You'll never guess how they legally resolve some elections that end in a tie.

The 2006 Democratic Primary race in Alaska's House District 37 between incumbent Representative Carl Moses and challenger Bryce Edgmon ended in a tie. **By law the election was settled by a coin toss.**

In the Bible they didn't flip coins but they did cast lots. The practice of casting lots is mentioned seventy times in the Old Testament and seven times in the New Testament. In spite of the many references nothing is known about the actual lots themselves. They could have been sticks of various lengths, flat stones like coins, or some kind of dice.

It may seem unspiritual to make major decisions by casting lots but the Old Testament saints believed what we read in Proverbs 16:33, "the lot is cast... but every decision is from the Lord." The Lord superintended the lot and revealed His will through the practice.

We're going to become very familiar with the casting of lots in the next several chapters of the Book of Joshua. Lots are repeatedly cast to determine the division of the Promised Land to each of the tribes.

Not all the tribes, however, participated in the casting of lots. Here in the last part of chapter thirteen we encounter three and one-half tribes who do not:

- Two and one-half tribes asked for the land on the borders of the Promised Land and were granted it by Moses prior to any casting of lots.
- The tribe of the Levites were told from the beginning that they would not receive any permanent inheritance in the land.

There are lessons to be learned from these tribes. I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 Look Beyond The Land To Your Lot, and #2 Look Beyond The Lot To Your Lord.

#1 Look Beyond The Land To Your Lot

(13:7-13 & 15-32; 14:1-5)

An Israelite had no doubts how the Promised Land was to be divided. Way before they ever arrived you read in Numbers 26:52-56,

Numbers 26:52 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:

Numbers 26:53 "To these the land shall be divided as an inheritance...

Numbers 26:55 ... the land shall be divided by lot; they shall inherit according to the names of the tribes of their fathers.

Numbers 26:56 According to the lot their inheritance shall be divided between the larger and the smaller."

It was thus appalling for the two and one-half tribes to ask for the land on the east side of the Jordan. It showed an indifference or even a disregard for God's Word.

We need to remain in awe of the Word of God. It's becoming too common for Christians to grow indifferent to it or to disregard it.

The two and one-half tribes persisted in their demands even after Moses initially rebuked them. Moses caved and granted their request provided they promise when the time came to send all their fighting men over the Jordan and into the Promised Land to help the remaining tribes conquer it.

At the beginning of the conquest Joshua reminded them of their promise. They dutifully sent a substantial army but not all of the fighting men. They left most, in fact, behind to guard their families and properties.

Now the time had come to divide the land by lot. We are reminded that these guys - the Reubenites, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh - already had received their portion. No lots would be cast for them.

They refused to wait for the Lord to decide their land by the casting of lots. Why? We're told in Numbers 32:1-2 & 5,

Numbers 32:1 Now the children of Reuben and the children of Gad had a very great multitude of livestock; and **when they saw the land** of Jazer and the land of Gilead, that indeed the region was a place for livestock,

Numbers 32:2 the children of Gad and the children of Reuben came and spoke to Moses, to Eleazar the priest, and to the leaders of the congregation, saying,
Numbers 32:5 Therefore they said, "If we have found favor in your sight, let this land be given to your servants as a possession. Do not take us over the Jordan."

The key phrase seems to be "they saw." They looked and liked what "they saw."

It comes down to this: **They trusted their own sight rather than walk by faith in the Lord.** Instead of waiting for their lot to be decided by God, they took matters in to their own hands.

That kind of looking and seeing has created a lot of trouble in the Bible:

- In the Garden of Eden God asked Adam and Eve to not eat the fruit of a certain tree. We're told that Eve looked at the tree and when she "**saw** that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate (Genesis 3:6).
- On the plains of Jordan, when their flocks and herds had grown too large to be supported by the land, Abraham told his Nephew Lot to choose the land he wanted. Lot "lifted his eyes and **saw** that all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere... like the garden of the Lord..." (Genesis 13:10).

Eve looked and **saw** and along with her equally hungry hubby plunged God's creation into sin. Lot looked and **saw** and began moving towards a life of increasing carnality that ultimately found him living in the midst of the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

I put the two and one-half tribes in that same category. They knew God wanted to give them their land by lot. Instead they insisted on getting their land by look.

Things deteriorated rather rapidly for those two and one-half tribes:

- Because they were cut-off from the central place of worship established in the Promised Land they set-up their own altar on their side of the Jordan River. It nearly resulted in a civil war between them and the tribes living in Canaan.

- In their later history because they were on the east side of the river they would be the first overrun, conquered, and enslaved by Israel's enemies.

They were so concerned about making for themselves a good life that they were willing to abandon God's will for their inheritance. One author commented that they cared more about their livestock than they did their children.

They should have looked beyond the land to the Lord and waited for Him to give them their lot in life.

In the New Testament we no longer make spiritual decisions by casting lots or flipping coins. We are to pray, to wait on the Lord, and to read His Word. We are to employ sanctified common sense along with a sense of the Lord's leading by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

As a result we don't often think of being given by God our lot in life. In fact, we often use that phrase in a negative way. If something overwhelming hits someone we say in an almost fatalistic way, "It was his lot in life to suffer."

I'd rather think along with the apostle Paul that "we are [God's] workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10). "Good works" summarizes the activities of our lives as we dedicate them to following and serving the Lord. God has foreordained them. They are our lot in life to discover as we walk with Him.

The two and one-half tribes got their eyes too much on the land and off of the Lord. It's something very easy to do. We start thinking too much about the world around us. If we're not careful we can settle short of God's best, settle for less spirituality. We can become 'borderline' Christians.

*Only one life, soon will be passed;
Only what's done for Christ will last.*

You want to be able to say with certainty, "This is my lot in life. It was given to me by the Lord. It was discovered through prayer, reading the Bible, and by submitting to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Good works, fruitful works, have resulted from accepting my lot in life. I look forward to the reward

seat of Jesus where I will hear from the lips of the Lord, 'Well done, My good and faithful servant.'”

There was one other tribe that did not receive a lot in the land but it was for a very different reason.

#2 Look Beyond The Lot To Your Lord (13:14 & 33; 14:4)

Let's read verses fourteen and thirty-three again in chapter thirteen and the end of verse four in chapter fourteen:

Joshua 13:14 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.

Joshua 13:33 But to the tribe of Levi Moses had given no inheritance; the Lord God of Israel was their inheritance, as He had said to them.

Joshua 14:4 ... And they gave no part to the Levites in the land, except cities to dwell in, with their common-lands for their livestock and their property.

After the Israelites left Egypt and crossed the Red Sea God called Moses up to Mount Sinai to receive the ten commandments and the pattern of the Tabernacle. While Moses was away the people asked Aaron to make them an idol. He fashioned for them the Golden Calf and they began to worship it.

Coming down from the mountain Moses said, "Whoever is on the Lord's side, come to me" (Exodus 32:26). The tribe of Levi gathered to Moses. They strapped on swords and killed three thousand of their brothers.

As a result of their taking sides with the Lord the tribe of Levi was selected to take care of "the service of the work of the Tent of Meeting," the Tabernacle (Numbers 4:3).

The Hebrew word translated "service" also means *warfare*. Therefore their service in the Tabernacle was a figure of spiritual warfare.

The Levites were constantly willing to risk their lives for God's service. They carried the sanctified vessels of the Tabernacle, which if mishandled, resulted in death.

Levites served as the honor guard, gatekeepers, and musicians of the Tabernacle. They also assisted the priests in preparing the offerings and in other aspects of the Tabernacle's functioning.

In contrast to the other tribes, Levites had no inherited lot in the Promised Land of Israel. Forty-two cities scattered throughout the inheritance of the other tribes were set aside as cities of Levites. In these cities the Levites served as spiritual teachers to the people of Israel.

These cities also served as shelters for those guilty of accidentally causing a person's death.

Whereas the other tribes worked the land, the Levite was dependent on the tithes and food gifts of others. In exchange for his life's service, the Levite received God's ordained sustenance through the required tithing of the nation.

The Levites had to look beyond a lot in the land to the Lord. On the surface you might feel a little sorry for them. In fact, they had received the better portion. The entire land was open to them and, as they traveled through it, they were being used by God to affect the lives of their more settled brothers and sisters.

We are to be like the Levites in that respect. We are to look beyond the 'land,' beyond this world, to eternity. Our contact with the world ought to be as light as possible. We want to be unencumbered so we can be available to minister to others. Wherever we find ourselves we are a source of spiritual counsel and encouragement to others - both believers and nonbelievers. We are to be a refuge in their stress and trouble, offering the spiritual protection of the love and forgiveness of God.

The apostle Paul warned of becoming rich and losing perspective:

1 Timothy 6:17 Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy.

1 Timothy 6:18 Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share,

1 Timothy 6:19 storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

The lessons we learn from these tribes is simple but life-altering:

1. First, be sure you are looking past the land, past the world, to the 'lot' God has given you to discover as you walk with Him serving Him.
2. Second, look even farther, beyond the 'lot' to the Lord Himself. Learn to be content as a stranger and pilgrim passing through life. Let the Lord use you to minister His grace to those you encounter on your way homeward to Heaven.