

The Land Is Divided.
Joshua 13:8-19:51.
Sunday evening, June 20, 2010.

I. Mosaic provisions for dividing the Land.

A. The land belonged first and foremost to the Lord God.

It would be the peoples' privilege to receive any of it at all.

The Lord reserved the right to divide it up as He saw fit so there would be no question or strife or complaint about the inheritance received by each tribe.

B. Several provisions the Lord had put into place long before Joshua would ever divide the land. Numbers 26:51-56.

1. In the days of Moses, while Israel still wandered in the wilderness, when the days of her wanderings would soon come to an end, Israel was numbered once more.

Based on the number of people in a tribe, that tribe would receive a larger or a smaller portion of the promised land as their inheritance.

2. A further provision was built into the system. The land being divided up into larger and smaller portions, it was determined by lot which larger and which smaller portion would be given to what tribe.

Josephus records how this was done according to Jewish tradition. Two urns were used. One contained the names of the portions of the land, the other the names of the tribes. Two representatives of each tribe would put their hand in each urn and take out, the one a portion of land and the other the name of a tribe, which land would then go to that tribe.

- This was done so that each tribe would receive its inheritance from the Lord, and not by the whims of any man.

- It was also done to prevent any complaining or infighting among the tribes.

3. The committee that made the survey of the land and divided it up into portions was called out by the Lord himself while they were still in the wilderness under Moses. Numbers 34:16-29.

The committee consisted of one man from each tribe, and the committee as a whole was overseen by Eleazar the High Priest, and Joshua, Israel's leader after Moses.

II. The land is divided in three stages.

A. The first stage was the land that was divided up among Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh. Their land was east of the Jordan River, and it was divided among them by Moses before Israel ever crossed the Jordan.

That division of land is repeated once more in Joshua 13:8-33.

B. Next comes the division of the larger portions of land to the larger tribes. These were Judah, Ephraim and the other half of the tribe of Manasseh. This was done by lot at the base camp in Gilgal and is recorded in Joshua 15, 16, and 17.

C. The third stage of dividing the land seems to have suffered a considerable delay, the circumstances of which remain obscure. A few things happen during this time:

1. Israel's base camp, together with the tabernacle, are moved to the territory of

Ephraim, and the city of Shilo. Shilo was right in the middle of the promised land, from east to west as well as from north to south and it was the native tribe of Joshua. The tabernacle would remain there for some 300 yrs.

2. At this time a new survey is made of the remaining land, and a very detailed division of it among the remaining seven tribes.
3. Joshua has to prod the people to action to give themselves to the work of dividing and inheriting their land, and he does so by way of rebuke in Joshua 18:3. Joshua 18 and 19 record a new survey and division of the remaining land, undertaken by a committee of 21; three men of each of the seven remaining tribes. Dividing the land among the tribes is done again by lot.

Applications:

The division of the promised land has a number of lessons built into it for our learning:

1. That all things in this world belong to God, and that it is a privilege for us to have any of it given to us as our inheritance. God disinherited the Canaanites and gave the land to His people. This should help us in cultivating a sense of contentment.
2. That it is God who guides and settles us into our respective stations in life.
 - For that reason we should have a certain reluctance to change.
 - For the same reason we should have a certain sense of purpose for being where we are.
3. Insofar it is God who guides and settles us in life, we should not fret over life's unchangeables, which are many. Examples would include the time and place in history you were born; your birth-order and gender; your genetic make-up; your parentage, etc.
4. A NT text that speaks to this issue for NT believers is Ephesians 2:10 "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."

Seeing how the Lord settled His people into their earthly inheritance should help us to own and embrace our earthly station in life. Have you done so?

III. Joshua enters his rest.

Inasmuch as their inheritance represented an entering into rest as an earthly type of the heavenly and eternal rest, it was fitting that in closing the section dealing with the division of the land, Joshua, last of all, should receive his inheritance as described in Joshua 19:49-51.

In this Joshua is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ who, as the greater Joshua, divides up the Lord's inheritance of spiritual blessings and new heaven and earth among His redeemed people.

Last week we saw how God the Father entered His rest on the seventh day of the creation week. Here we have a picture of God the Son entering into His rest in the person of Joshua. Having divided the Lord's inheritance among the people Joshua enters his own rest in typological form.

And the Lord Jesus, having destroyed the last enemy, and divided up the Lord's inheritance to His people, having left none behind, He presents the finished kingdom to His Father, and enters His own rest as Joshua did. 1 Corinthians 15:24-28.

We are in good hands under the leadership of our greater Joshua.