



Distribution of Land to Remaining Seven Tribes Joshua 18:11-19:51

Introduction

Israel was in the land God had promised to Abraham hundreds of years earlier. As the Psalmist reminds us, *He remembered His holy word with Abraham His servant; and He brought forth His people with joy, His chosen ones with a joyful shout. He gave them also the lands of the nations, that they might take possession of the fruit of the peoples' labor* (Psalm 105:42-44, NASB).

Five tribes had received their portion of the land: Reuben, Gad, Judah, Ephraim, and Manasseh. The plan for dividing the remaining land was by lot through specified leaders under Joshua, as the LORD had commanded Moses. All went smoothly and Joshua dealt with questions wisely. Dividing inheritances often causes family upheavals but there were no disputes among the tribes of Israel. They were genial and ready to settle their families rather than provoking rivalries.

Let us consider the extent to which God's work suffers due to our own self-centeredness when it could prosper if we chose geniality and cooperation.

Outline of Joshua 18:11-19:51

- I. Portions Distributed to Final Seven Tribes - Joshua 18:11-19:48
- II. Portion to Joshua - Joshua 19:49-51

I. Portions Distributed to Final Seven Tribes - Joshua 18:11-19:48

A. First Lot to Benjamin - Joshua 18:11-28

The tribe of Benjamin received land between Ephraim and Judah, near Jerusalem. It is interesting that even though the land was assigned by lot, Rachel's descendants; the tribes of her son Benjamin, and Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, were adjacent. We can trust God with details over which we have no control, nor need to have control.

Two significant leaders were from the tribe of Benjamin, the Old Testament Saul (Israel's first king) and the New Testament Saul who became Paul, the apostle.

1. Jacob's prophecy - Genesis 49:27

Jacob's prophecies to his twelve sons just before he died are highly significant. They are found in Genesis 49.

Jacob depicts Benjamin as a warlike tribe, *a ravenous wolf*, devouring his prey and dividing the spoil. Among the judges of Israel, Ehud was from the tribe of Benjamin. After Israel had suffered for eighteen years under servitude to Eglon, king of Moab, Ehud plotted and killed him with a dagger. After this he led the people of Israel against Moab and killed about ten thousand Moabites, *all stout men of valor; not a man escaped* (Judges 3:12-30). Also, Judges 20:15-16 records that the tribe of Benjamin had *twenty-six thousand men who drew the sword* and among them were *seven hundred select men who were left handed; every one could sling a stone at a hair's breadth and not miss*.

2. Moses' prophecy - Deuteronomy 33

Moses saw Benjamin dwelling in safety, with the LORD as his shield.

B. Second Lot to Simeon - Joshua 19:1-9

The second lot of the final seven fell to Simeon. This is interesting because although he was the second son of Jacob and Leah (Genesis 29:33), he was the sixth tribe to receive an inheritance.

1. Within Judah's inheritance

Simeon's inheritance is described as lying within the land of Judah. The tribe of Simeon dwindled in size and eventually was absorbed into Judah.

2. Jacob's prophecy - Genesis 49:5-7

Jacob linked Simeon and Levi in the prophecy as being "*brothers; instruments of cruelty*." The background is found in Genesis 34:25 where Simeon and Levi avenged their sister Dinah's rape by killing not only Shechem who raped her, but also slaughtering every male in the town. Their retaliation endangered Jacob's family and violated his personal code of peaceful coexistence. Jacob judged their actions as excessively cruel and violent. The tribe of Levi later redeemed their honor by standing with Moses against the debauchery and shame of Aaron's golden calf (Exodus 32:28). The tribe of Simeon never redeemed itself.

- a. *Cursed be their anger* - Genesis 49:6-7

"*Let not my soul enter their council*," Jacob cursed their angry behavior and disassociated himself from it.

b. Divided and scattered - Genesis 49:7

Jacob's prophecy saw Simeon divided from his brethren and scattered among the tribes. This was fulfilled with Simeon's inheritance allotted within Judah's.

3. Moses' prophecy - Deuteronomy 33

Moses did not even mention the tribe of Simeon in his prophecies.

Simeon and Levi both committed violent sins in anger. In the New Testament, Peter and Judas also sinned, Judas by betraying Jesus, and Peter by denying Him. The difference in both cases was that one repented and changed his behavior while the other did not. Levi repented and his tribe became the priestly tribe to all the others, as pictured in Moses' prophecy (Deuteronomy 33:8-11). Simeon decreased in numbers and lost his identity. Peter repented and became the head apostle while Judas went out and hanged himself.

Do you think you have committed an unpardonable sin? If you are reading these notes you probably have not. However, sin can become unpardonable if you do not seek pardon through faith in Jesus Christ as your sin-bearer (1 Peter 2:24). *Seek the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon* (Isaiah 55:6-7).

C. Third Lot to Zebulun - Joshua 19:10-16

Zebulun was Jacob's tenth son and the last of Leah's six sons. Zebulun's inheritance was in the north between the Sea of Galilee and the Mediterranean. One of its towns, Gath Hopher, was later the birthplace of the prophet, Jonah (2 Kings 14:25).

1. Jacob's prophecy - Genesis 49:13

Jacob foretold that Zebulun would *dwell by the haven of the sea, become a haven for ships*, and reach to the border of Sidon. Though the general territory matches the prophecy, the details may await fulfillment in the future.

2. Moses' prophecy - Deuteronomy 33:18

Moses' only words for Zebulun are, "*Rejoice Zebulun in your going out.*" With the advent of Christ, Zebulun would have had reason for rejoicing as He spent much of His time in the area of Zebulun where Cana and Nazareth were located. In fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy, the people who walked in darkness had a great light shined upon them (Isaiah 9:1-2 and Matthew 4:12-16).

D. Fourth Lot to Issachar - Joshua 19:17-23

Issachar preceded Zebulun in birth order. His inheritance was north of Manasseh and nestled in a fertile plain.

1. Jacob's prophecy - Genesis 49:14-15

Jacob foresaw Issachar as a worker, a strong donkey lying down between two burdens, farming the pleasant land, and enjoying a good life. But in order to maintain the good life, Issachar paid tribute to various marauding bands.

2. Moses' prophecy - Deuteronomy 33:18

Issachar is told to "*rejoice in your tents*" affirming his abundance with perhaps a bit too much comfort.

There is a blessing in the good life of ease and plenty, but there is also a subtle trap. The blessing is obvious. The trap is the hold it may take, influencing one to cling to a lifestyle and compromise to keep it. King David stayed home when he was middle-aged rather than going to war with his troops. He fell into adultery and murder (2 Samuel 11).

Where are you compromising because it is comfortable? Prayer? Work in your church? Ministering to your family or neighbors? What effect does the cross, which Jesus tells us to take up, have on the good life?

E. Fifth Lot to Asher - Joshua 19:24-31

Asher was Jacob's seventh son, born of Leah's handmaid, Zilpah. Asher's inheritance was on the seacoast north from Mount Carmel to Israel's border. The tribe produced no judge or hero. However Anna, the aged prophetess who recognized the baby Jesus as the Messiah (Luke 2:36-38), was from the tribe of Asher.

1. Jacob's prophecy - Genesis 49:20

Bread and royal dainties would be Asher's specialty.

2. Moses' prophecy - Deuteronomy 33:24

The name Asher means "blessing", and Moses bestowed upon him blessing and favor, "*Asher is most blessed of sons:...favored by his brothers.*"

Dipping his foot in oil suggests a fertile land abounding with olives, although some have conjectured it may mean crude oil being discovered in Asher's territory. If that is the case, it is something still future.

F. Sixth Lot to Naphtali - Joshua 19:32-39

Naphtali is the other tribe mentioned in the Messianic

prophecy of Isaiah as *the people who walked in darkness who have seen a great light* because the Light of the World worked miracles there by the Sea of Galilee. (See Isaiah 9:1-2 and the fulfillment in Matthew 4:12-17).

Barak, who helped Deborah win a great battle, is the only famous Naphtalite (Judges 5).

1. Jacob's prophecy - Genesis 49:21

A deer let loose and goodly words are Jacob's description of this tribe. The "goodly words" may refer to Jesus' teachings in Naphtali's territory, including the Sermon on the Mount, spoken on the shores of Galilee.

2. Moses' prophecy - Deuteronomy 33:23

Moses saw the tribe of Naphtali as *satisfied with favor and full of the blessing of the LORD*. He exhorted them to *possess the west and the south*. Naphtali experienced the favor, or grace, of the LORD which satisfies as nothing else can. Their land was blessed as the place where Jesus taught and healed many.

Christians, full of the grace and favor of the Lord, who commune with Him in His Word and prayer, are blessed. Are you enjoying the Lord's favor? Do you savor His presence? Do you share His blessings with others?

G. Seventh Lot to Dan - Joshua 19:40-48

Dan was the fifth son of Jacob and firstborn of Bilhah, Rachel's maid. Dan received the last lot, a small slice of territory between Judah, Ephraim, and Benjamin. This included the port of Joppa where Peter received his vision from the Lord mandating inclusion of the Gentiles. Present day Tel Aviv is nearby. But Dan, threatened by the Amorites (whom they should have destroyed) migrated, invaded other territories, and settled north of Galilee.

1. Jacob's prophecy - Genesis 49:16-18

"Dan shall judge his people." Israel's most famous judge, Samson, was a Danite. *"Dan shall be a serpent...a viper by the path that bites the horse's heels so that its rider falls backward."* This could refer to Dan's migratory, predatory ways.

2. Moses' prophecy - Deuteronomy 33:22

Moses saw Dan as a lion's whelp, a marauder, in the area of Bashan, where some of the tribe finally settled. Dan does not appear among the twelve tribes in Revelation 7.

Do you disdain your lot in life because it seems less than others have? Do you covet other's possessions, their appearance, or status? Are you unwilling to make the most of what you have but willing to take what others have? Begin today to be satisfied with your God-given lot and trust God to enhance it and help you rid your life of enemy obstacles by prayer.

II. Portion to Joshua - Joshua 19:49-51

A. Tribal Tribute to Joshua - Joshua 19:49

The children of Israel gave an inheritance among them to Joshua, the son of Nun. They demonstrated a deep respect and love for their leader who had brought them into the land and led them to victory. This is seen in their last act before disbanding and going to possess their possessions. The nation honored Joshua with his own portion, as his old friend Caleb also had received.

B. Joshua's Choice of Timnath-Serah - Joshua 19:50

As an Ephraimite, Joshua chose a mountain village in his tribe's territory and developed it into a city.

C. Closing Summary - Joshua 19:51

The chapters on the division and distribution of the land, Joshua 14-19, close with a brief summary of:

- The people responsible for the inheritances - Eleazar, the priest, Joshua, and the elders of the tribes;
- The plan of distribution - by lot;
- The place of distribution - Shiloh, before the Lord, by the door of the Tabernacle.

Application

Israel's inheritance was in the land. The believer's inheritance is in Christ and includes being chosen by God and blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places (Ephesians 1:3). These blessings are God's promises and are to be enjoyed now.

As believers, we will each be held accountable at the judgment seat of Christ for what we did with our inheritance. Will you begin today to find the blessings God has promised you in the pages of the Bible and apply them to your specific situation? For example, will you tell the Lord you believe His promise to supply all your needs, to answer your prayers, to give you wisdom to know what to do, to never to leave you, to fill you with His Holy Spirit? Will you say with me, "Every promise in the Book is mine, every chapter, every verse, and every line?"