

Into the Promise: A Journey Through Joshua

Lesson Seven: “Because you have followed the Lord...fully”

Joshua 13-17

The message of Scripture is that our life in Christ is more than the forgiveness of sins, more than the escape from God’s condemnation, but a new way to live, a new source of zest that thirsts and hungers for more. ¹
~ C.S. Lewis

We have arrived at a new season for the children of Israel that signals a brand new way of living. The Israelites, under Joshua’s leadership are transitioning from *taking* the land to *occupying* the land. Now, each tribe will step *Into the Promise* of Canaan, claim their inheritance, and enjoy what God has prepared for His people.

Max Anders gives us helpful commentary on what inheritance meant to the Hebrews:

The idea of **inheritance** was very significant for the Israelites. God gave them a place of their own that would remain the property of their tribes and families. They could finally put out their own mailboxes. For four hundred years they had been slaves in Egypt. For forty years they had been nomads in the desert. Now they were finally landowners in their own country. ²

I. Seasons of Change (Joshua 13:1-33)

In our recent study on the book of Ecclesiastes, we were reminded, “There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven...a time for war and a time for peace” (Ecclesiastes 3:1; 8). For the past several years, Israel has been in an extended season of war. Now she is about to enter into a new season of peace and prosperity. Just as seasons change, so, too, our lives move from one season to the next.

The Israelites’ inheritance in the Promised Land has a caveat. God requires obedience to the Law. As long as the Israelites honor the Lord with their worship and obedience, He will bless them. Sadly, we know that Israel eventually rebels against the Lord, disobeys the Law, and defiles the land. When God’s justice finally eclipses His mercy, He will use the Assyrians and the Babylonians to chastise them.

A. Joshua 13:1-7

Our chapter opens with this declaration. “Now Joshua was old and advanced in years when the Lord said to him, “You are old and advanced in years and very much of the land remains to be possessed” (Joshua 13:1). Joshua has been the commander-in-chief, led the Israelites out of the wilderness, taken them across the Jordan River, brought them into Canaan, and established them in The Promised Land. He has been a mighty warrior, a mighty leader, and God has given him victory upon victory. A new season is on the horizon for Joshua, but God assures him that He is not through with Him yet.

Life Lesson #1

You are never too old to serve the Lord. In every season, He has a purpose and a plan for your life. In Isaiah 46:4, God says, “Even to your old age **I will be the same**, and even to your graying years I will bear you! I have done it, and I will carry you; and I will bear you and I will deliver you” (emphasis mine).

As God’s purposes for the nation of Israel are changing, Joshua’s role is progressing from that of a military general to an administrator.

Life Lesson #2

The ebb and flow of life tends to come in seasons. Some stay longer than others, but most of the time God brings about new purposes and plans as the seasons change.

The time has come to “apportion [the] land for an inheritance to the nine tribes and the half-tribe of Manasseh” (Joshua 13:7). Even though not all the land has been conquered, Israel is firmly established in the Promised Land. The remainder of the conquest is to be handled by the tribes of Israel on a town-by-town basis. Allotment of the land will increase Israel’s “skin in the game” and build their commitment to involve and invest themselves in completing the conquest.

B. Joshua 13:8-33

The two-and-a-half tribes of Israel (Rueben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh) had previously asked Moses (Numbers 32) for the land “in the plains of Moab, beyond the Jordan, at Jericho to the east” (Joshua 13:32) on the far side of the Jordan.” After some stern warnings, Moses had agreed on their decision on one condition: They were required to help the other tribes conquer the land of Canaan before settling there. They fulfilled this requirement before crossing back over the Jordan.

Their decision to dwell outside the borders of the Promised Land causes them to forfeit all the national blessings bestowed on the Israelites dwelling in Canaan. And their location makes them extremely vulnerable both to military attack and ungodly influences.

Life Lesson #3

When Abram and Lot divided the land, Lot based his decision on what he saw and pitched his tent towards Sodom. This decision, in time, would result in his families’ ruin. In similar fashion, the two-and-a-half-tribes will suffer as well. Beware of making any decision based on human intellect rather than spiritual wisdom.

In addition to their poor decision to dwell outside Canaan’s borders, they fail to drive out the enemy from their land (Joshua 13:13). God’s command to completely eradicate the enemies of the land was a safeguard for His people. As we read in our study this week:

Allowing a pagan nation to live among them [would] draw the hearts of the people away from the one true God and into horrible, barbaric, and destructive pagan practices. In fact, centuries later, these two-and-a-half Transjordan tribes will be the first to be driven out by the Assyrians as judgment for the worship of pagan gods (1 Chronicles 5:26).³

Life Lesson #4

The story of the two-and-a-half tribes serves as a historical reminder of a spiritual condition plaguing many believers today. Beware of becoming a borderline believer! Hanging out on the fringes of the Christian community robs you of deepening your walk with the Lord and building godly relationships within the family of God. And the incidence of spiritual attacks by the enemy goes up exponentially due to the lack of protection. Such shortsightedness builds a carnal Christian and breeds a casual attitude towards the things of God (James 1:22-27).

II. Caleb’s Request (Joshua 14:1-15)

The land is apportioned among the nine and a half-tribes by the lot. In ancient Israel, casting the lot was simply a method the Lord used to reveal His will and provide guidance. The lot was often a pebble or a stick set aside for this purpose. They may have used the Urim and Thummin that Eleazar, the priest, would have carried. Jewish tradition says each tribe’s

name was placed in a jar, drawn out, and matched up to a plot of land which was also drawn out of another vessel. We do not know for certain but what we do know is that the expectation was that God would control the lot in order to give a right answer. Proverbs 16:33 says, “The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord.” Considering God was superintending the whole process, any conflicts or jealousies among the tribes were automatically eliminated.

Life Lesson #5

At Pentecost (Acts 2), the Holy Spirit descended to indwell all believers. We no longer have a need for casting lots. The Holy Spirit, along with the Word of God, reveals God’s will and direction for our lives.

Kenneth Gangel makes an interesting observation about Caleb:

Caleb was a Kenizzite. This means he was descended from Esau, not from Jacob, and was therefore outside the promised line. But somehow either before they went to Egypt or while there, Caleb’s ancestors joined with the Israelites and the tribe of Judah. His name means “all heart,” and he did have a great heart for God. When it came time for each tribe to pick a representative to spy out the land, the tribe of Judah selected Caleb, who was forty years old back then. Only he and Joshua came back with positive reports, Joshua’s affirmation following Caleb’s brave stand. ⁴

Since Caleb is included in the tribe of Judah, it is possible that his ancestors went to Egypt during the same famine that drove Jacob’s family to Egypt. And it is likely that an ancestor married a woman from the tribe of Judah during the time the Israelites were enslaved in Egypt.

Life Lesson #6

Caleb was grafted into God’s family, into the tribe of Judah, no less. “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans 10:13 KJV).

Caleb and Joshua were the only spies out of the twelve that were sent to bring back a good report, one that did not exclude God from the equation. The ten spies “made the heart of the people melt with fear” (Joshua 14:8).

Life Lesson #7

The masses believed the negative report and were ready to stone Caleb and Joshua, stage a mutiny against Moses, and enlist another leader to get them back to Egypt. The majority is not always right. Beware of being persuaded or pressured by the majority.

Because of Caleb’s faithfulness, he is the first one of the tribe of Judah to receive his inheritance. At eighty-five years old, he does not ask to retire on a parcel of land that would provide a life of ease and comfort. Caleb asks for mountains to climb and giants to conquer! He trusts the Lord will go with him to drive out the giants, known by Anakim, from the land.

The testimony of Caleb’s life is one of faithfulness and devotion. Caleb declares “I followed the Lord my God fully” (Joshua 14:8). Long before Caleb had stepped *Into the Promise* of his inheritance in Canaan, he had managed to distinguish himself among three million Israelites as a man who wholeheartedly followed God!

Life Lesson #8

Caleb staked claim on his inheritance. Forty-five years had not diminished his confidence in God’s promise. His motto was simple. No hesitation. No holding back. No turning back. Caleb’s prayer may have been, “Lord, I will follow you fully. Anywhere. Anytime. Any cost.” May we follow the Lord fully!

Life Lesson #9

Like Caleb, we have already received our inheritance in Christ. Now claim it. Stand in it. Own it. The Lord “has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 1:3) and given us the Holy Spirit as “a pledge of our inheritance” (Ephesians 1:14) right HERE and right NOW.

III. The Apple Doesn’t Fall Too Far (Joshua 15:13-19)

Caleb moves in and drives out three sons of Anak and offers the hand of his daughter in marriage to the man who could capture their city. Othniel steps up and wins her hand (and hopefully her heart). She gets her husband to ask her father for a field in the land of the Negev, which he agrees to. Then she asks for springs of water, and he gladly complies. It appears his daughter is willing to ask for what she wants just as her father had. Like father, like daughter.

Lesson #10

When God is at the center of the family, a legacy of godliness is built and remains. Caleb blessed his son-in-law and he blessed his daughter. Blessedness is the benchmark of a family operates as God intends. If this does not describe your family of origin, you can break generational curses and begin a new line of blessedness in the name of Jesus!

IV. A Harbinger of Impending Trouble (Joshua 15:1-17:18)

Most, if not all, of the Israelite tribes fail to completely drive out the Canaanites from their inherited land. God has promised to be with them in this endeavor, but they choose to make peace with their enemies and live among them. The Israelites’ failure to fully conquer the land and drive out the sworn enemies of God will be a contributing factor to future struggles as described in the book of Judges.

Life Lesson #11

You cannot make peace with your enemies. You must put on (and keep on) the whole armor of God in order to stand against the schemes of the devil (Ephesians 6:10-17).

Life Lesson #12

The plot of land inherited by the Israelites had boundaries. Beloved, live in the fullness of God, but respect the boundaries He has set which are given to protect you and keep you from harm.

So many lessons to be learned from Joshua 13-17! But the greatest is the life lesson of Caleb who “followed the Lord...fully.” Take his example to heart. You will be blessed, and you will pass down untold blessings to your family for generations to come. Beloved, step *Into the Promise* of God’s goodness and live abundantly.

¹ Lewis, C.S. Retrieved from: <https://www.cslewisinstitute.org/resources/born-to-grow-moving-beyond-forgiveness-to-an-abundant-life/>

² Gangel, K. O. (2002). *Joshua* (M. Anders, Ed.; p. 202). B&H Publishing Group.

³ *Into the Promise*, pp. 2-4.

⁴ Gangel, K. O. (2002). *Joshua* (M. Anders, Ed.; p. 212). B&H Publishing Group.