

Not
one
Failed
Promise.

Life Group Study Series

Joshua: Week Ten

26th March 2017

Bible

13

Joshua 13:1-6 (NIV)
Land Still to Be Taken

1 When Joshua had grown old, the Lord said to him, “You are now very old, and there are still very large areas of land to be taken over.

2 “This is the land that remains: all the regions of the Philistines and Geshurites, **3** from the Shihor River on the east of Egypt to the territory of Ekron on the north, all of it counted as Canaanite though held by the five Philistine rulers in Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath and Ekron; the territory of the Avvites **4** on the south; all the land of the Canaanites, from Arah of the Sidonians as far as Aphek and the border of the Amorites; **5** the area of Byblos; and all Lebanon to the east, from Baal Gad below Mount Hermon to Lebo Hamath.

6 “As for all the inhabitants of the mountain regions from Lebanon to Misrephoth Maim, that is, all the

Sidonians, I myself will drive them out before the Israelites. Be sure to allocate this land to Israel for an inheritance, as I have instructed you, **7** and divide it as an inheritance among the nine tribes and half of the tribe of Manasseh.”

14

Joshua 14:1-5 (NIV)
Division of the Land West of the Jordan

1 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 Joseph’s descendants had become two tribes—Manasseh and Ephraim. The Levites received no share of

the land but only towns to live in, with pasturelands for their flocks and herds.

5 So the Israelites divided the land, just as the Lord had commanded Moses.

Joshua 14:6-15 (NIV)

Allotment for Caleb

6 Now the people of Judah approached Joshua at Gilgal, and Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him, “You know what the Lord said to Moses the man of God at Kadesh Barnea about you and me. **7** I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the Lord sent me from Kadesh Barnea to explore the land. And I brought him back a report according to my convictions, **8** but my fellow Israelites who went up with me made the hearts of the people melt in fear. I, however, followed the Lord my God wholeheartedly. **9** So on that day Moses swore to me, ‘The land on which your feet have walked will be your inheritance and that of your children forever, because you have followed the Lord my God wholeheartedly.’

10 “Now then, just as the Lord promised, he has kept me alive for forty-five years since the time he said this to Moses, while Israel moved about in the wilderness. So here I am today, eighty-five years old!

11 I am still as strong today as the day Moses sent me out; I’m just as vigorous to go out to battle now as I was then.

12 Now give me this hill country that the Lord promised me that day. You yourself heard then that the Anakites were there and their cities were large and fortified, but, the Lord helping me, I will drive them out just as he said.”

13 Then Joshua blessed Caleb son of Jephunneh and gave him Hebron as his inheritance. **14** So Hebron has belonged to Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite ever since, because he followed the Lord, the God of Israel, wholeheartedly.

15 (Hebron used to be called Kiriath Arba after Arba, who was the greatest man among the Anakites.)

Then the land had rest from war.

17

Joshua 17:14-18 (NIV)

The Complaint of the People of Ephraim

14 The people of Joseph said to Joshua, “Why have you given us only one allotment and one portion for an inheritance? We are a numerous people, and the Lord has blessed us abundantly.”

15 “If you are so numerous,” Joshua answered, “and if the hill country of Ephraim is too small for you, go up into the forest and clear land for yourselves there in the land of the Perizzites and Rephaites.”

16 The people of Joseph replied, “The hill country is not enough for us, and all the Canaanites who live in the plain have chariots fitted with iron, both those in Beth Shan and its settlements and those in the Valley of Jezreel.”

17 But Joshua said to the tribes of Joseph —to Ephraim and Manasseh— “You are numerous and very powerful. You will have not only one allotment **18** but the forested hill country as well. Clear it, and its farthest limits will be yours; though the Canaanites have chariots fitted with iron and though they are strong, you can drive them out.”

20

Joshua 20:1-6 (NIV)

Cities of Refuge

1 Then the Lord said to Joshua: **2** “Tell the Israelites to designate the cities of refuge, as I instructed you through Moses, **3** so that anyone who kills a person accidentally and unintentionally may flee there and find protection from the avenger

of blood. **4** When they flee to one of these cities, they are to stand in the entrance of the city gate and state their case before the elders of that city. Then the elders are to admit the fugitive into their city and provide a place to live among them. **5** If the avenger of blood comes in pursuit, the elders must not surrender the fugitive, because the fugitive killed their neighbour unintentionally and without malice aforethought. **6** They are to stay in that city until they have stood trial before the assembly and until the death of the high priest who is serving at that time. Then they may go back to their own home in the town from which they fled.”

21

Joshua 21:1-3 (NIV) Towns for the Levites

1 Now the family heads of the Levites approached Eleazar the priest, Joshua

son of Nun, and the heads of the other tribal families of Israel **2** at Shiloh in Canaan and said to them, “The Lord commanded through Moses that you give us towns to live in, with pasturelands for our livestock.” **3** So, as the Lord had commanded, the Israelites gave the Levites the following towns and pasturelands out of their own inheritance:...

Joshua 21:43-45 (NIV)

43 So the Lord gave Israel all the land he had sworn to give their ancestors, and they took possession of it and settled there. **44** The Lord gave them rest on every side, just as he had sworn to their ancestors. Not one of their enemies withstood them; the Lord gave all their enemies into their hands.

45 Not one of all the Lord’s good promises to Israel failed; every one was fulfilled.

Sermon Summary

This week we are dealing with the largest section so far in our series: 13:1-21:45. Nine chapters in all and nearly all of it filled with tedious descriptions of places we’ve never heard of! This is the allotment of the land to the twelve tribes of Israel and, while it might be a bit of tough slog, it is the theological heart of the book (as well as the transition to the final chapters). There are a number of indicators that this section is as religiously motivated as the rest of the book, as well as pointers in the direction of this section’s main challenge.

The first clue is the sheer length of this part of Joshua. It is easily the longest section in the book and this should indicate its importance. However, there are other indicators that religious concerns are still dominating. For instance, we are told in 9:51 that the allotment of the land was not made by legal experts or surveyors, but by Eleazar the high priest in the presence of the Lord at Shiloh. To this can be added a couple of features of the arrangement. For example, the section ends with the allotment of cities of refuge – cities for people to flee too if there was an unintentional murder (20:1-6) – and the cities for the Levites – whose task it was to teach the people to live faithfully (21:1-3). This focus on the law and worship are consistent with the themes of the book. Likewise we have the stories of Caleb and the men of Ephraim in Joshua 14 and 17. The allotment of land to the tribe of Judah is preceded with a story of Caleb’s desire to receive his inheritance as the Lord had promised. The allotment of land to the tribes of Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh) is followed by a complaint by the men of Ephraim and an expression of fear over the

Canaanites (17:14-18). This chiastic structure: a story of courage and faith by a man of Judah, followed by the allotment to Judah, the allotment to Ephraim, followed by the story of complaint and fear by Ephraim, reminds us that the response to the promises of God is central to Joshua. Will the people respond in courage and faith, or will they respond with complaint or fear?

However, the theological heart of this entire section is focused on the faithfulness of God to Israel and the invitation that is extended to Israel. The section concludes with a summary statement of God's faithfulness, but opens with a reminder that there was more land to be conquered. Deuteronomy 7:22 states the Lord would not allow Israel to conquer the whole land all at once, and He has been true to this promise. There are Canaanites still in the land and this is not described either as a deficit in the Lord's faithfulness nor as a failure on behalf of Israel. However, it is not neutral. The presence of the Canaanites invites the Israelites to faithful living while they wait for the promises of the Lord to be fulfilled in their entirety. They were to live in such a way as to invite the nations to join them in following the Lord, but were faced with the threat of being invited to follow the ways of the nations! This introduces the theme of the final chapters of Joshua which focus on faithfulness.

The invitation to faithful living, given to Israel, is also given to us. We live 'between the times'; between the complete work of Jesus and the consummation of the kingdom. As we wait, we are invited to live faithfully so that everyone might know the Lord and begin to follow him!

We'll deal with faithful living in the weeks to come as we look at the closing chapters of Joshua. However, it is worth asking, are we living faithfully as we await the fullness of the kingdom?

Questions

These questions are a guide for conversation. Please take your time over them, and don't feel in a rush to finish them. The objective of a LifeGroup discussion is to engage in meaningful conversation around a Biblical idea, invite the Holy Spirit to lead your time of reflection.

You might want to have a go at question 1 before reading the passage.

1. Opening Discussion: What does God's faithfulness look like in your life? Take some time to consider this question and share your reflections with the group. Your experiences may seem great or comparatively small, but try not to judge them. We are often unaware at the time, of the significance a seemingly small intervention or provision from God might have.
2. Take some time to read the listed sections taken from Joshua chapters 13-21, there are fewer questions this week, so you have time to consider this larger section of scripture. As you read, or hear it read, notice if there are words/phrases that 'jump out at you'. What are they? (Try to resist the urge to explain why this word/phrase jumped out – this is about observing, not judging, allowing God to show you something). Invite the Holy Spirit to lead you to that word/phrase. Take some time to share what these words/phrases/pictures are.

3. The story of Caleb (From the tribe of Judah - 14:6-15) is meant as a contrast with the people of Ephraim (From the tribe of Joseph - 17:14-18)? Who do you most relate to and why?
4. The Lord's plan was to drive out the nations slowly (see Deut. 7:22). This left open the possibility of his people being tempted to follow the gods of the nations. Why do you think God allowed this possibility?
5. The ideal conquest, as we have seen in the accounts of Rahab and the Gibeonites, is for the nations to respond to the Lord in faith. We are called to the same faithful response. What does it look like for us to be faithful to God, as we live in expectation of Jesus' return?

Prayer

Take some time to reflect on each other's answers to question 5, then together, ask God to increase your faith as you live out lives of faithfulness to Him.