

## Joshua 12 to 15 – The Inheritance – Part 1

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### INTRODUCTION:

Well, this morning we're returning to our journey through the book of Joshua. This week and next, you might picture us as transferring from a leisurely hike through the mountains to a high speed trip over the plains in a bullet train. If you'll remember, we left off at the end of Joshua chapter 11, with this statement from verse 23:

***So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the LORD had spoken to Moses. And Joshua gave it for an inheritance to Israel according to their tribal allotments. And the land had rest from war.***

The first phase of the taking of the Promised Land by the power of God is what we've seen happening in the first 11 chapters of Joshua. Now, in chapters 12 through 21 we're going to see God dividing the full extent of the inherited land among the tribes, some of which was still to be conquered, and then calling them to finish taking it all with continued trust in his power and his commitment to fight for them. He had shown unmistakably how no enemy could stand against them as they obeyed his Word and walked in his power, now they would need to continue trusting, following and fighting courageously if they wanted to actually possess the full extent of their inheritance.

Chapters 12 through 21 contain minute details about the land and boundaries God was giving to each tribe, so for these chapters we're going to be jumping on board a bullet train with a few scheduled stops at scenic areas.

We're going to try and tackle 10 chapters in 2 weeks, so you might want to buckle your seatbelts! In your bulletins I've provided you with an outline of these chapters that will hopefully help you keep track of where we are as we speed through. But before we leave the station, let's reflect briefly on a couple of the overall themes of Joshua to keep us aware of the big picture as we get on our way.

As most of you are well aware of by now, the Israelites, under the leadership of Joshua, have experienced unprecedented victory over all the enemies they had come against. As Joshua studied and obeyed God's Word, communicated with God continually and followed his battle plans, and courageously led the people into battle with confidence in God, the Lord fought for his people and no one was able to stand against them. Even the giants in the land who had frightened them so much 40 years earlier, were easily defeated as they engaged them in the power of God. Joshua, in his connected relationship with God and surrender to his purposes, teaches us so much about how we also can remain connected to God and walking through life by his power.

The book of Joshua, which we always need to remember is an historical account of events that actually happened in the same real world we live in right now, also has so many spiritual applications to our lives today. And that's because God is writing the story of history, and little by little unveiling truths about who he is and what he's doing and his amazing plan for bringing salvation and an eternal inheritance to human beings who will simply come to him in repentance and faith. Joshua, of course, is a type of Jesus Christ. They share the same name in Hebrew in fact, and we can learn so much from Joshua that points to Jesus and his leadership and the salvation and victory over enemies he perfectly provides to those in relationship with him.

This past week I was reading about Joshua in *Unger's Bible Handbook*, and I want to share one other big picture theme from Joshua that will help us understand the book even better. In summing up the overall spiritual meaning of the book of Joshua, the *Handbook* says this:

*"Anticipation* marks the book of Deuteronomy, *realization* the book of Joshua. Redemption *out of Egypt* [or purchase out of slavery] under Moses gave the Israelites a redeemed *position*. [In other words, having been purchased out of slavery, their identity was now freed children of God...no longer slaves!] Redemption *into the Promised Land* under Joshua gave them a redemption *experience* of victory and conquest in possessing their possessions. The two factors, *position* and *experience*, are inseparable in salvation. Salvation is basically a position or status, but it is also an experience of the blessings involved in possessing that position. In a spiritual sense the book of Joshua is the Ephesians of the OT. "The

heavenlies” of Eph 1:3; 6:12 are illustrated by the land of Canaan, which is a picture of the *experience* of victory and conquest belonging to those positionally redeemed, or purchased out of slavery. Those who had been [bought out of slavery in] Egypt by the Passover blood now claimed the blessing of that redemption by possessing the land.”

Our identity in Christ today as God’s beloved children, forgiven, set free from slavery to sin, and set apart for God’s purposes, invites us to take possession of the firstfruits of our inheritance, which include the experience of God’s steadfast love; the power of his Spirit; victory over sin; freedom from fear; the peace that passes understanding; and so much more. What we see illustrated in an earthly, physical and temporal way through Joshua and the Israelites, has a spiritual and eternal application to each of us today. So let’s keep our eyes and ears open as we continue through Joshua. Open up your Bibles, if you would, to Joshua chapter 12 and follow along as we work through chapters 12 through 15 today.

## I. THE CONQUERED AND UNCONQUERED LAND (12:1-13:7)

### A. Land conquered under Moses (12:1-6)

Two kings conquered under Moses on the east side of the Jordan River: Sihon, king of the Amorites and Og, king of Bashan.

### B. Land conquered under Joshua (12:7-24)

Thirty-one kings conquered under Joshua.

### C. Land still unconquered (13:1-6a)

Josh 13:1-2

***Now Joshua was old and advanced in years, and the Lord said to him, "You are old and advanced in years, and there remains yet very much land to possess. 2 This is the land that yet remains:***

*SHOW UNCONQUERED TERRITORIES MAP (4-2)*

## D. The LORD's promise and command to divide the land (13:6b-7)

Josh 13:6b-7

***I myself will drive them out from before the people of Israel. Only allot the land to Israel for an inheritance, as I have commanded you. 7 Now therefore divide this land for an inheritance to the nine tribes and half the tribe of Manasseh."***

The LORD's command was to allot and divide the land now, rather than waiting until all the land was conquered. He was showing them the full extent of their inheritance, of which they could continue to take possession **IF they would** 1) know and obey his Word; 2) remain connected to him and follow his lead, and 3) engage courageously in battle. If they would do that, **the LORD himself would drive out the people** in the land. No enemy would be able to stand against them! Just as he had done so powerfully up to this point, so would he continue to do until all of the inheritance was possessed by God's people.

## II. THE DIVIDING OF THE LAND (13:8-21:42)

### A. The inheritance east of the Jordan (13:8-33)

The eastern land had already been given by Moses to the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the ½ tribe of Manasseh.

#### 1. The full extent of the eastern land (13:8-14)

Josh 13:13

***13 Yet the people of Israel did not drive out the Geshurites or the Maacathites, but Geshur and Maacath dwell in the midst of Israel to this day.***

Even here in the early distribution of the land east of the Jordan, we already see a troubling sign: the Israelites were not fully obeying God's command to remove the people from the land. They were only obeying halfway, which always leads to weakness and eventually God's discipline. The Geshurites and the Maacathites were allowed to

remain in the land. This is an ominous trend we'll see repeated several times in our fly-over of Joshua chapters 12 to 21: the Israelites repeatedly allow the Canaanites to remain in the land, often requiring them to do forced labor, but nevertheless disobeying God's clear command to devote them to destruction.

Josh 13:14

**To the tribe of Levi alone Moses gave no inheritance. The offerings by fire to the Lord God of Israel are their inheritance, as he said to him.**

Isn't it interesting that the Levites, the priests, didn't get a land inheritance like the rest of the tribes? Why was that? Because they had a much better inheritance: the LORD himself. Their inheritance was the privilege of serving in the presence of the LORD and leading God's people to pure worship of the one true God. Their inheritance was of eternal value that far exceeded any land inheritance.

2. **The land inherited by Reuben (13:15-23)**
3. **The land inherited by Gad (13:24-28)**
4. **The land inherited by ½ Manasseh (13:29-31)**
5. **Summary statements regarding eastern land (13:32-33)**

Josh 13:32-33

***32 These are the inheritances that Moses distributed in the plains of Moab, beyond the Jordan east of Jericho. 33 But to the tribe of Levi Moses gave no inheritance; the Lord God of Israel is their inheritance, just as he said to them.***

Here again we're reminded that the LORD himself is the inheritance of the Levitical priests. And guess what? We're going to be reminded of this truth several more times in the next few chapters, so I'd say it must be a pretty important truth! And it's a truth that has a very significant application to those of us today who have come to salvation

in Jesus Christ. We'll talk a little more about that toward the end of today's message.

## **B. The inheritance west of the Jordan (14:1-21:42)**

### **1. Introductory statements regarding allotment of western land (14:1-5)**

Josh 14:1-5

***These are the inheritances that the people of Israel received in the land of Canaan, which Eleazar the priest and Joshua the son of Nun and the heads of the fathers' houses of the tribes of the people of Israel gave them to inherit. 2 Their inheritance was by lot, just as the Lord had commanded by the hand of Moses for the nine and one-half tribes. 3 For Moses had given an inheritance to the two and one-half tribes beyond the Jordan, but to the Levites he gave no inheritance among them. 4 For the people of Joseph were two tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim. And no portion was given to the Levites in the land, but only cities to dwell in, with their pasturelands for their livestock and their substance. 5 The people of Israel did as the Lord commanded Moses; they allotted the land.***

Did you notice that reference to the Levites and their inheritance again?! Just making sure you're paying attention!

Well, Eleazer the priest, Joshua, and the heads of each tribe, were the key figures in the allotment and division of the Promised Land, and they did it by lot...meaning *they allowed God to determine which tribes got which lands*. Proverbs 16:33 speaks of how casting lots was used for the purpose of allowing God to make the decision:

Prov 16:33

***33 The lot is cast into the lap, But its every decision is from the Lord.***

Here in Joshua chapter 14, we see again: Joshua's commitment to following the leadership and direction of the LORD in everything. He wasn't using his power and authority to divide up the land according to

his preferences or reward his favorite tribes, but rather he simply wanted to do God's will and divide up the land according to God's plan and purposes.

## **2. Caleb's request and inheritance (14:6-15)**

Well, as Joshua, Eleazer and the heads of the tribes prepared to divide up the land by casting lots, a familiar person from the past showed up to speak to Joshua. Let's read what happened in verses 6 through 15 of Joshua chapter 14:

Josh 14:6-15

***6 Then the people of Judah came to Joshua at Gilgal. And Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him, "You know what the Lord said to Moses the man of God in Kadesh-barnea concerning you and me. 7 I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the Lord sent me from Kadesh-barnea to spy out the land, and I brought him word again as it was in my heart. 8 But my brothers who went up with me made the heart of the people melt; yet I wholly followed the Lord my God. 9 And Moses swore on that day, saying, 'Surely the land on which your foot has trodden shall be an inheritance for you and your children forever, because you have wholly followed the Lord my God.' 10 And now, behold, the Lord has kept me alive, just as he said, these forty-five years since the time that the Lord spoke this word to Moses, while Israel walked in the wilderness. And now, behold, I am this day eighty-five years old. 11 I am still as strong today as I was in the day that Moses sent me; my strength now is as my strength was then, for war and for going and coming. 12 So now give me this hill country of which the Lord spoke on that day, for you heard on that day how the Anakim were there, with great fortified cities. It may be that the Lord will be with me, and I shall drive them out just as the Lord said." 13 Then Joshua blessed him, and he gave Hebron to Caleb the son of Jephunneh for an inheritance. 14 Therefore Hebron became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite to this day, because he wholly followed the Lord, the God of Israel. 15 Now the name of Hebron formerly was Kiriath-arba. (Arba was the greatest man among the Anakim.) And the land had rest from war.***

Joshua and Caleb were the only men who were of fighting age when the original 12 spies spied out the land, whom God had kept alive during the 40 years of discipline in the wilderness. They were the only two warriors at that time who had demonstrated faith that God had the power to defeat the giants and the fortified cities in the land of Canaan. They were the only ones willing to follow God courageously into battle against what seemed like an insurmountable foe. They were the only ones who wholly followed the LORD, and because of that the LORD had kept them alive and strong and healthy for 45 years now, while the rest of the men from their generation died off one by one. Now Caleb was ready to receive what had been promised so long ago by Moses: his family's land inheritance in the land of Canaan.

Isn't amazing to see how strong Caleb's faith in God still was after all these years. Notice that he didn't ask for land that had already been conquered, so he could just peacefully, with no effort move into a new home. No, he asked for land that was still under the control of the Anakim, the giants, and he had confidence that by God's power he would have no problem defeating them and taking possession of the city that would later be renamed, Hebron.

In response to Caleb's request, Joshua blessed Caleb and gave him the land he requested. And what was the reason why Caleb received this special privilege of choosing the first city out of all the Promised Land? It was *because he wholly followed the LORD, the God of Israel*. Even though, through no fault of his own, Caleb had to endure with the rest of Israel the 40 difficult years of God's discipline, he remained faithful to God and was eventually rewarded bountifully. The blessings and rewards of following the LORD completely even through the hard times never disappoint!

### **3. The land inherited by Judah (15:1-63)**

Well, in chapter 15, verses 1 to 63, the division of the western land to the tribes begins with the tribe of Judah, Caleb's tribe, and we get a full, detailed description of the land given to Judah. In verses 13 to 14, we also get some information about what happened with Caleb as he

sought to drive out the giants from Hebron by God's power. Beginning in verse 13:

Josh 15:13-14

***13 According to the commandment of the Lord to Joshua, he gave to Caleb the son of Jephunneh a portion among the people of Judah, Kiriath-arba, that is, Hebron (Arba was the father of Anak). 14 And Caleb drove out from there the three sons of Anak, Sheshai and Ahiman and Talmi, the descendants of Anak.***

Once again, God was faithful to provide everything Caleb needed to defeat his enemies and take possession of his inheritance...as Caleb was willing to walk in God's ways, follow God's lead, and engage courageously in battle with full trust in the power of God!

But as chapter 15 comes to close, we read more ominous words about the rest of the tribe of Judah, who were not operating as effectively as Caleb in the power of God:

Josh 15:63

***63 But the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the people of Judah could not drive out, so the Jebusites dwell with the people of Judah at Jerusalem to this day.***

The weed seeds of disobedience to God's commands and doubt in his power, were already cropping up here and there and Judah was thereby unable to drive out the Jebusites from Jerusalem.

Disobedience and unbelief in God's power always cripple our ability to accomplish his will and walk in his purposes.

## **APPLICATION AND CONCLUSION**

Well, this is where we'll stop our bullet train trip for today. We'll restart the journey next week. But as we close, let's just think about a few things we've learned in the 4 chapters we've covered today. First of all, we saw that God's power was ready and available for possessing the remainder of the land, but his people would need to keep following his Word, seeking his direction continually

and engaging courageously in battle against very intimidating enemies. It would take risky effort on their part as they took bold action with trust in God's power. This was the only way they would be able to possess the rest of their inheritance.

And this has such an important application to our lives today as well.

We, as believers in Christ, have been given the firstfruits of our inheritance; most importantly, God's Holy Spirit dwelling inside us...sealing us as God's adopted children, offering to guide us into God's Word and give us wisdom for every decision we need to make, and making available God's power for life and accomplishing God's purposes. But did you know that it's very possible for us to just keep following our own wisdom, doing what we want instead of considering God's purposes, and not experiencing the fullness of God's power in our lives. Lots of Christians today are walking through life this way in fact and forfeiting so much of the beautiful inheritance God wants to give them...missing out on the peace, the power, the rest, the joy in any circumstance that only God can provide...missing out on accomplishing the good works God has planned for each of his children to do during our lives here on earth.

Why are so many Christians missing out on all this? Because their eyes are fixed on this world and on experiencing and enjoying all it has to offer. Their eyes are fixed on an earthly inheritance and their time is consumed with pursuing it. Like the Israelites, enjoying the full benefits our inheritance only comes when our eyes turn from pursuit of the world to full pursuit of God...knowing him through his Word, sharing life with him through continual prayer and worship, and courageously stepping out in the power of his Spirit to engage in battle and accomplish the good works he calls us to do.

A second truth we've learned from our study of Joshua today is this: *Not fully obeying God's Word always leads to weakness and eventually God's discipline.* Though the Lord was ready and willing to fight with his full power on behalf of the Israelites, he wouldn't do it if they were walking in disobedience or obeying him only halfway. Listen to what happened later in Judges chapter 2, verses 1 through 4:

Judges 2:1-4

***1 Now the angel of the Lord went up from Gilgal to Bochim. And he said, "I brought you up from Egypt and brought you into the land that I swore***

***to give to your fathers. I said, 'I will never break my covenant with you, 2 and you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall break down their altars.' But you have not obeyed my voice. What is this you have done? 3 So now I say, I will not drive them out before you, but they shall become thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare to you." 4 As soon as the angel of the Lord spoke these words to all the people of Israel, the people lifted up their voices and wept.***

We see great sadness here from the Israelites as they realized how their inability to take full possession of their inheritance had come because of their disobedience to God's Word. Though he had clearly told them repeatedly that they were to make no covenant with the people in the land, but drive them out completely, they had ignored God's Word and done the opposite. And you know what? They may have had really good reasons from a human viewpoint for disobeying God's Word. Perhaps they felt sorry for the conquered people and thought it would be harsh to devote them to destruction. Perhaps they thought having slaves would be very useful and convenient and would help them build God's kingdom faster. We can always find lots of reasons and rationalizations for disobeying God's Word, can't we? But in every case, disobedience is still disobedience and amounts to putting our wisdom above God's. And whenever we do that, we can count on weakness and God's discipline to be the result. Walking in the power of God's Spirit is never possible when we're dabbling in sin and living out of step with God's Word.

And a final application for today is this: *Have you fully comprehended that if you're in Christ, then your inheritance, like the Levites, is also the LORD himself?* Is that the true inheritance you're looking for in life right now? The New Testament tells us that all believers in Christ are now priests. Martin Luther liked to call it "the priesthood of all believers." And like the Levitical priests here in Joshua, we also have the best inheritance imaginable. As we've already discussed, we experience the beginnings of that inheritance now on earth as God's Spirit actually lives inside us and through Christ we're able to come, at any time or place, into the very presence of the Father himself...talking with him, worshiping him, hearing from him, and receiving his power and wisdom for life. But the full extent of our incredible inheritance is going to blow our minds beyond what we can even begin to comprehend right now. That full inheritance is waiting to be revealed gloriously in heaven.

Listen to a couple New Testament passages that speak about us as priests and the incredible inheritance we have in Christ:

Rev 1:5-6

***To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood — 6 and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father — to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever.***

Are you living out your identity as a priest to God? That's kind of hard for us to wrap our minds around, isn't it? But that's what we are! And listen to this:

Rev 5:9-10

***"Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. 10 "You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth."***

Not only are we priests, but throughout eternity we will reign with Jesus upon the new earth. Now that's an inheritance! And listen to this from 1 Peter 1, verses 3 through 7:

1 Peter 1:3-7

***3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade — kept in heaven for you, 5 who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 7 These have come so that your faith — of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire — may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.***

Like the Levites, we as believers in Christ have the absolute best inheritance of all...one that can never perish, spoil or fade! And right now, while waiting for our full future inheritance in heaven, we get to experience the firstfruits of that inheritance as we live in connected relationship with God and are shielded by his

power and given everything we need to endure the trials and battles of life. Let's not waste our time pursuing an earthly inheritance that can be destroyed by moths, rust and thieves and will be of absolutely no value when we die. Let's keep our eyes and energies fixed on walking into the fullness of the beautiful eternal inheritance God is offering to us through Christ!

## Joshua 12 to 21 – Complete Outline

- I. THE CONQUERED AND UNCONQUERED LAND (12:1-13:7)
  - A. Land conquered under Moses (12:1-6)
  - B. Land conquered under Joshua (12:7-24)
  - C. Land still unconquered (13:1-6a)
  - D. The LORD's promise and command to divide the land (13:6b-7)
  
- II. THE DIVIDING OF THE LAND (13:8-21:42)
  - A. The inheritance east of the Jordan (13:8-33)
    - 1. The full extent of the eastern land (13:8-14)
    - 2. The land inherited by Reuben (13:15-23)
    - 3. The land inherited by Gad (13:24-28)
    - 4. The land inherited by ½ Manasseh (13:29-31)
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  - B. The inheritance west of the Jordan (14:1-21:42)
    - 1. Introductory statements regarding allotment of western land (14:1-5)
    - 2. Caleb's request and inheritance (14:6-15)
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    - 4. The land inherited by Joseph (16:1-17:18)
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      - b) The portion allotted to Ephraim (16:5-10)
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      - d) The people's complaint and Joshua's response (17:14-18)
    - 5. Assembly at Shiloh and exploration of remaining land (18:1-10)
    - 6. The land inherited by Benjamin (18:11-28)
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    - 9. The land inherited by Issachar (19:17-23)
    - 10. The land inherited by Asher (19:24-31)
    - 11. The land inherited by Naphtali (19:32-39)
    - 12. The land inherited by Dan (19:40-48)
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    - 14. Summary statements regarding division of western land (19:51)
  
  - C. The special cities and pasturelands
    - 1. The cities of refuge (20:1-9)
    - 2. The cities and pasturelands allotted to Levi (21:1-42)
  
- III. THE GREAT GIFTS AND FAITHFULNESS OF THE LORD (21:43-45)
  - A. The LORD gave them the land (21:43)
  - B. The LORD gave them rest (21:44)
  - C. The LORD kept all his promises (21:45)

## SERMON APPLICATION AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

**Read Joshua 12 to 15, asking the Holy Spirit to guide you as you read. Look at the surrounding verses, take your time and talk to God as you read and meditate on it. Think through the following, writing notes and thoughts and looking up related Scriptures as needed:**

Write down from the passage or from what was shared in the sermon: 1) a truth that stands out to you; 2) anything you believe God is showing you or telling you personally through it; 3) any related Scripture that comes to mind; 4) any questions you have.

The Lord's command to the Israelites was to completely destroy and drive out the inhabitants of the Promised Land. Read Romans 8:9-14. How does this same command apply to our walk with the Lord today and how do we carry it out?

The inheritance of the Levites was the Lord himself. The same is true for believers in Christ. Read Hebrews 9:13-15 and Colossians 1:9-14, both of which speak of God's inheritance for believers. What can you learn from these passages about your inheritance and how to live in that inheritance and enjoy its benefits?

As you look at your own life right now, would you say that you are living with your eyes and energies focused on your eternal inheritance in Christ? Is there anything that needs to change in this area? Describe.

Read and meditate on 1 Peter 1:3-7 and write down any truths that encourage or challenge you.

**Summarize below any actions God is asking you to take, any attitudes He wants to change, or any unbelief that needs to be defeated. Pray over these items and make a plan for change by the power of the Spirit.**