

Joshua 07-10-18a

This is Thursday, the 18th of October, 2007. We continue tonight our study in the book of Joshua. We are in chapter 19, right at the end, getting ready to go into chapter 20.

Let's take a moment at the outset to go to the Lord in prayer. It's an opportunity to focus our attention, to remember the importance of the ministry of God's Holy Spirit, as well as the power that God places in our hearts and in our souls through the truth of His Word. Shall we pray? Father, it is a comfort and encouragement for us to remember that it is not by our mind or by our power that we live the life to which we have been called, but it is by Your Spirit.

It is through the strength that Your Word imparts to us and the ongoing presence of Your Spirit. We appreciate the opportunity to assemble ourselves and to receive the benefit of the ministry that each spiritual gift provides. We thank You for this portion of Your Word that is before us, and we ask Your blessing on us as we study it together.

May each of us find in it the truth that will thoroughly equip us for every good work. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, we have come to the conclusion of a rather challenging section of Scripture, which is the division of the land. These chapters, basically 13 through 19, are at first glance a little dry. There is not a lot of story to carry it forward.

It's a lot of boundaries and a lot of technical detail. But what we have essentially seen is the division of the land between five tribes and seven tribes. Two and a half on the east side of the Jordan.

Remember who those were? Reuben Gad and half of Manasseh. We have then the intrusion right at the beginning, because that happened in the days of Moses. Those people got their inheritance in the days of Moses.

This account really begins with Caleb in chapter 14, verses 6-15. Caleb has one of the two faithful spies, Caleb and Joshua. I think of them together.

Caleb and Joshua are the faithful men who endure through the forty years of wandering. Caleb gets his inheritance. You'll remember in Numbers that he is also the designated representative for the tribe of Judah.

Back in the days of Moses, when each tribal representative was named by name. When you come into the land, here are the men who will divide. Here are the representatives for each tribe.

Caleb was the representative of the tribe of Judah. So he goes first. Chapter 14, verses 6-15.

Then, the tribe of Judah, the ruling tribe, gets their apportionment. You have that in 15, verses 1-12. Then you have another section for Caleb, right in the middle of that.

In 13-19, you have another Caleb section. Then you finish up the chapter with the rest of the allocation for Judah. Then, the tribes of Joseph, Ephraim, and Manasseh are dealt with in the next two chapters.

Chapter 16 and Chapter 17. It's all about Ephraim and the other half of Manasseh. If you look on a map, and those who are listening remotely can go.

I put a map out in the handouts folder, but I didn't print it out for you all. So you just have to have that sense of tantalizing anticipation until you get a hard copy. If you have a map in the back of your Bible or something that shows the division of the tribal territories, you'll see that Manasseh goes across the Jordan.

Manasseh lives on both sides of the Jordan. Some on the west and some on the east. Ephraim is there as well.

Those are the Joseph tribes. Chapter 16-17 of Joshua details their allotment. Eventually, the Manasseh that's on the west side of the Jordan is going to migrate to the west.

Because that whole trans-Jordan area is going to get overrun. Pretty soon, Israel is all going to be to the west of the Jordan. When you get to the time of the monarchy and the divided kingdom and so on, Israel is all in the promised land area.

They're not over in trans-Jordan. That was kind of a bad choice. So whatever's left of Manasseh is going to go join their brethren.

Then we have that episode of the seven tribes that haven't done anything yet. Joshua says, let's get on with it. Come on, you people.

In chapter 18, verses 1-10, he says, hey, you seven tribes, let's get with it. Survey the land, divide it into seven parts. What's the hold up? And so they do.

So then we have, in chapter 18, the tribe of Benjamin. Chapter 19, the tribes of Simeon, Zebulun, Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, and Dan. Benjamin and all the rest of them get their allocation.

So now we're at the end of chapter 19. Now what was the significance of all that? Why did God put that in His word? Why do we care about these boundary details, these specific cities, and so on? Well, again, and this is probably the last time I'll refer to these points, if you stand back and look at it without a lot of translational interpretation, without a lot of deep thinking, God assigns different things to different people. We have different Canaanites to defeat.

We have different lands to occupy. Sometimes it's the highlands. Sometimes it's the

lowlands.

Sometimes it's kind of desert. Sometimes it's very lush. Sometimes it's easy to take.

Sometimes it's difficult to take. God sorts that out. These lots fall.

These apportionments are made by God. And we should remember, if there's anything you remember out of these chapters, whatever it is that we face, whatever circumstances we have, whether it's heredity, environment, the actions of others, forces beyond our control, slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, it's all in God's hands. God did it.

God brought it before us. God leads us in the way that He wants us to go. It's for our good.

And it's a matter of faith to look at it in that way, isn't it? We decide how we're going to... Are we going to cry? Are we going to complain? Are we going to say, Oh God, how could you let this happen? Or are we going to say, God would not have given me this unless it's something that by His grace and by His power, I can seize and lay hold of and turn into an eternal possession. That's the goal, isn't it? That's the promise to the fathers. I will drive out the nations before you.

I will give this to you as an eternal inheritance. Just take it by faith. That's our job, day by day by day.

Anything that we face, there's nothing too hard for the Lord. With God, all things are possible. If God be for us, who can be against us? There's nothing that comes our way that is too hard.

God always provides a way of escape. There's always a means of provision. Sometimes we have to endure until the end.

But it's bearable. It's doable. You have to trust God and His judgment and His wisdom that He wouldn't give us a circumstance.

He wouldn't present us with a challenge. He wouldn't present us with a prosperity if He didn't think we could handle it. Some of us wait and wait and wait hoping for prosperity.

And God is protecting us from ourselves because if we had prosperity, we would self-destruct. Look at the documentaries of people who win the lottery and all the horrible things that happen to them because they don't have capacity. God knows our capacity.

He's a wise and loving Father. And when we trust His grace, and we trust His love, and we trust His plan and purpose for our lives, we are content in whatever state we find ourselves, just like the Apostle Paul says. That's the major message of these chapters.

And you can look at the details and see the wide variation and the wide difference in some of the tribes who complain, and some of the tribes who aren't content with what God assigns them, and they move. The tribe of Dan is going to span the entire country. They start out way down south.

They're going to end up way up north. They're going to be the worst tribe, spiritually, in all of Israel. They're going to disappear off the map by the time you get to Revelation, not even mentioned in the servants of God listing.

And they went as far away from the assigned inheritance that God gave them as they could. And it shows. So we don't want to do that.

This, as the psalmist says, the lines have fallen to me. The lots have been apportioned to me in pleasant places. It's a good inheritance.

It's a goodly assignment that God gives us. And we have to look at it in that way. Daughters of Zelophehad, Caleb, Joshua, all of these men.

You can see the specifics. Well, this brings us to the tail end of chapter 19. And this is where we pick up tonight.

Because the last note after the tribe of Dan last card Charlie to get assigned here. Verse 48. This was the inheritance of the tribe of the sons of Dan, according to their families, these cities with their villages.

Verse 49. When they finished apportioning the land for inheritance by its borders, the sons of Israel gave an inheritance in their midst to Joshua, the son of Nun. In accordance with the command of the Lord, they gave him the city for which he asked, Timnath-serah, in the hill country of Ephraim.

So he built the city and settled in it. And when it says he built the city, if they gave him this city for which he asked, obviously he rebuilt it. He enhanced it.

He renovated it. He did extensive reconstruction and rehabilitation on it. And of course, where would Joshua get the resources for this? Well, Joshua is the leader in Israel and this evidently was something that was a cooperative effort between Joshua and the people of Israel.

Not only did they give him the city, but out of the allotment of spoils that had come from the victories and so on throughout Canaan, there were resources. Because, you know, it's kind of like a barn raising in the old days of our nation. Out in the rural areas, someone needed a barn, everybody would show up and up would go the barn.

And when Joshua got ready to rebuild that city, it's likely that many volunteer laborers from throughout Israel came in gratitude and in appreciation for Joshua's long service

and pitched in and helped him rebuild this city. We don't know the extent. We don't know the size.

We don't know the details. But he built the city and settled in it. You find an interesting bracket here in this section.

The two men who 40 years earlier believed God bracket this section. Caleb starts it. Joshua ends it.

Caleb is the first man in Israel to receive his inheritance. Joshua is the last. And Judah is the first tribe to receive their inheritance.

Joshua is the last. And Joshua's inheritance is given to him. It is a token of appreciation.

It is a mark of respect and gratitude. Israel gives him the city for which he asked in accordance with the word of the Lord, literally the mouth of the Lord. These were the inheritances.

And this is our summary statement now. Which Eliezer the priest, Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel divided as an inheritance by lot in Shiloh before the Lord at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. So they made an end of dividing the country.

This summary statement is important for a couple of reasons. First of all, it marks the end of this section. But secondly, think about this now.

You are Abijah the son of Aholiab, somewhere milling about in the tribes and clans of Israel. And you look around at your land and what your clan and your family and your tribe has been assigned. And you are near a border.

And you say, boy, why didn't they give us that land right there across the creek? It is so much better and greener. Why am I over here on this rocky, unsavory soil? Who says I have to stay here? Why can't I go over there? What is the authority behind the division of the land? It's contained in this verse. Eliezer the priest.

Is there any doubt that Eliezer is anointed according to the word of the Lord, according to the will of God, as a son of Aaron? Does he have the authority? Did Moses not state, when you come to the land, these are the men who will be in charge? There is no question that he is the designated individual to participate in this division, as well as Joshua. Who can doubt that Joshua has been given divinely delegated authority? The heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel. These men were named by Moses himself under God's authority years and years ago.

These individuals, particularly the last seven tribes, they sent their own representatives out and did this survey. They agreed on the boundaries. There is no room for dispute.

There is no room for trying to overturn the division. It has the delegated authority. It has the supreme authority of God himself.

And this prevents internecine, intramural, tribe-to-tribe warfare. The worst thing that could happen would be for the tribes of Israel to turn on each other once they get into the land and fight over boundaries. This has ever been a problem between neighboring Indian tribes, neighboring African villages.

Look around in the history of the world. Border disputes have always been a source of conflict. God forestalled this and prevented it by making it crystal clear these are the divinely ordained boundaries.

Now, what is the application? Are there areas of great freedom and great discretion that we have as believers? We have wide-ranging freedom as to how we order our priorities, how we set our goals, and so on. But there are certain boundaries that we are clearly not to cross. There are certain iron-clad rules.

There are exhortations. Love one another. Be ye holy.

Let not your good be spoken of as evil. Look out not only for your own interests, but also for the interests of others. Put the interests of others ahead of your own.

Walk in love. Love one another. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, that you love one another.

Paul gives many illustrations of the idea that if what you're doing causes a brother to stumble, cut it out. It's not worth it. It's the difference between your own interests and the interests of someone else.

If your freedom confuses someone and messes them up, then restrict your freedom. It is a high call. It is a boundary that we do not cross.

Our freedom is all within our own area. But there are certain things we do not do. Paul said, I don't have the right to require support from all you churches, but I don't exercise it because I don't want to make an issue out of those things.

One time he circumcises one of his fellow laborers in Christ and another time he does not. You have the difference between Timothy and you have the difference with Titus. There is freedom, but there is also a time for one thing and a time for something else.

We have that discretion. We have to make that call. It's responsibility.

God has laid out clear boundaries and within those boundaries we have a great deal of discretion and a great deal of freedom. But Joshua, of course, as a prototype, as an archetype, as a foreshadowing of the later Yeshua, is the last to receive his inheritance. There is a long tradition in the Marine Corps that officers don't eat until their men eat.

All the juniors go first. You make sure you take care of your troops and everybody else has theirs. Then you go get your chow.

The officers are always the last ones in line. The higher ranking you are, the longer you wait. If there is a general in the area, out there in the field, every other Marine in the bivouac or wherever you are will have gotten his chow before the general gets anything.

That's a mark of respect. It is a mark of concern. The Lord Jesus Christ is going to do the same thing.

He has sacrificed himself on our behalf. His ultimate inheritance from the Father is going to come to him. We are already reaping the benefits of Jesus' victory on the cross, aren't we? We are laying up for ourselves treasure in heaven.

We are priests. We share in the benefits that his victory on the cross obtained. And yet, he is still seated at the right hand of the Father.

He is waiting until all of the enemies are made his footstool. He is waiting for the word from the Father to come in and claim his inheritance. We are already enjoying great benefits.

He will ultimately obtain his own inheritance. There is a lot of significance in these closing few verses. This was all done before the Lord at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.

The place is important. If anything was amiss, God would have spoken. It reminds me of the artillery.

When I was a battalion fire direction officer, there were three or four batteries out there firing missions. There were observers calling in missions. There were seven different radio networks all going at the same time.

There was the fire direction net. There was the observed fire net. There was the tactical net.

There was the admin net. There were all of these different nets. The fire direction officer had to be listening to all of them at the same time and monitoring.

When someone gives a call for fire, it has to be plotted on the map. Is it safe? Is somebody flying over in an aircraft? Could you be endangering someone? Where are the friendlies? Is there an intermediate crest that is going to get hit by this fire mission? Are there friendly troops maneuvering? Do we have recon or scouts or anybody out there? Every mission has to be monitored. It all has to be checked.

But if the fire direction officer says nothing, there is a rule. When fire missions come over a radio net, silence is consent. If you don't hear otherwise from higher headquarters, that

mission is okay.

It would be silly to have to wait each time and to monitor seven nets and get on each one and say, okay, that's okay. Okay, that's okay. Pick up seven different radios, seven different phones, talk to seven different RTOs and say, tell them that one's okay.

Okay, tell them that one's okay. Silence is consent. It's my job to speak up if that thing is not okay.

And we get on there and say, end of mission on that call for fire. That's out of safe. We've got a no-shoot zone because we've got aircraft in the area, whatever it may be.

Silence is consent. This is all done at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. If anything were amiss, if anything were contrary to God's will, can God speak up? His silence is tacit consent.

That means God has seen and approved. It's right there at the door of the tabernacle. Nobody can argue with that.

It's clearly the will of God. So they made an end of dividing the country. It's very interesting to look at a map detailing what they actually took out of what was assigned.

It kind of reminds me, if you look in the modern day, at how much of the land of Israel is actually controlled by the Israelis and how many areas belong to the Palestinians. There are these little pockets and contiguous areas. It looks like a real mixed up blobular, globular, nebulous sort of a thing where there's these two different entities controlling different sections of the country.

And it is remarkable to look at the ancient map of what Israel actually took and controlled and see that it doesn't look all that much different. Some of the same areas that they never took the first time from the Philistines, they still do not control today with your Palestinians. And you know Palestine and Philistine are related terms.

And it's kind of an interesting exercise to overlay those two maps and see that there are traditional areas where Israel has had a hard time maintaining control. Well, this brings us to chapter 20. And the cities of refuge.

I suggested last week that you take a look at this in advance and see if you could kind of figure out what might be going on with these. Let's read this together. The Lord also spoke to Joshua, saying, Speak to the children of Israel, saying, Now, let's stop right there.

Think about that. There is a structure in the communication of God, isn't there? Why didn't God... Can God speak and all Israel hear His voice? Of course. Could God have assembled the leaders of the twelve tribes and said, leaders of the twelve tribes, here's

the plan.

The Lord spoke to Joshua. Joshua speaks to the children of Israel. There is a chain of communication.

And it is a principle from beginning to end in the word of God that God delegates responsibility for communication to certain individuals. In the Old Testament days, it was often the prophets. In the New Testament, it is the apostles.

We look for that apostolic authority in our New Testament books. We look for prophetic authority or obvious divine inspiration in the Old Testament books. And that's how the Old Testament canon was recognized by Israel, by the Jews.

They said, which of these has authority? Which of these were spoken of and quoted by the prophets? Which of these were written by obvious men of God like David and Solomon and so forth? And that's how those were recognized. In the New Testament, it is either an apostle or someone directly connected to an apostle that wrote every single one of those books. So, the Lord spoke to Joshua and said, Joshua, you speak to the children of Israel.

There is mediation. And this principle foreshadows Jesus Christ. He is the mediator of the New Covenant.

There is one mediator between God and men, the man, Christ Jesus. So, who do we look to for God's truth? It's the Lord Jesus Christ and the apostles that he personally selected and the individuals closely associated with them, Mark with Peter, Luke with Paul, and so forth. Jude and James with the Lord himself.

These individuals are the ones who wrote the books of the New Testament and everybody else is out. So, appoint for yourselves, God says to Joshua, cities of refuge of which I spoke to you through Moses, that the slayer who kills a person accidentally or unintentionally may flee there, and they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood. When he flees to one of those cities and stands at the entrance of the gate of the city and declares his case in the hearing of the elders of that city, they shall take him into the city as one of them and give him a place that he may dwell among them.

Then, if the avenger of blood pursues him, they shall not deliver the slayer into his hand, because he struck his neighbor unintentionally but did not hate him beforehand. And he shall dwell in that city until he stands before the congregation for judgment, until the death of the one who is high priest in those days. Then the slayer may return and come to his own city and his own house to the city from which he fled.

Now, I ask myself this question. It's a big deal to have twelve tribes come in and figure out where they're all going to live. They've got that figured out, so there they are.

Now, what is the next order of business in God's mind? God doesn't say a lot of things that He could have said. What would you say if you were in charge of the nation of Israel and they just now got their land allotments and they all know where they're supposed to go and they're all in the process of filtering in there and stomping out the last of the enemy? What's the most important thing now? What did they do in our country with the thirteen colonies when they got together with the Constitutional Convention and we've got people living in these different places, we need some kind of a confederation. Did they have a Constitutional Convention in Israel? What's the next order of business? Isn't it interesting that of all of the possible things God could have addressed, He could have said, well, now, here's your tax system.

You need to select a capital city and have sort of a national capital. Let's get the Jerusalem thing cranked up. Let's find a spot for my temple.

Now that you're not traveling around anymore, no need for a tabernacle, let's set the thing up. Let's get some organization going to the worship services here. Let's figure out how we're going to centralize all of the national standing army now that we're not on the rampage in Canaan anymore.

Or here's what you need to do for your national guards for each of the tribes. Here's your instructions for setting up your militias and your police force and your law enforcement and whether or not you should build jails. None of that stuff.

What is the first thing God says? Now that you've got your land, here's what you need to take care of. The difference between murder and manslaughter. The difference between a grievous intentional sin, an intentional breaking of a commandment, and an unintentional breaking.

Why this? This is really kind of what I was getting at last week when I said, think about this upcoming chapter. What's going on with these cities of refuge? Why on earth would God pick this now that they're finally in the land of promise? The first thing that comes to my rather uniquely bent mind is Genesis. What happened after Noah got out of the ark? What's the first thing God talks to Noah about Do you remember? If you go back there in Genesis and get to chapter 8 and chapter 9, the whole post-flood thing, let's take a look at it right quick.

Because there is something of an echo, something of a repetition, of a pattern. God remembered Noah in chapter 8. He comes out. God blessed Noah in chapter 9. Told him, reiterated the command that was given to Adam and Eve, be fruitful and multiply, and so on.

I've given you every living thing. He changes the diet because you've got a new dispensation going. You remember my personal dispensation marker is the menu.

Fruit in the garden. Cereals and fruit after the fall. And then when Noah comes out of the ark, you've got a diet change.

God says, I've given you every moving thing that lives as food. I've given you all things even as the green peppers, I mean the green herbs. But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is its blood.

Surely for your life blood I will demand a reckoning. The first thing God talks about in this new dispensation, the new world post-flood, I will demand a reckoning for life blood. From the hand of every beast I will require it.

From the hand of man, from the hand of every man's brother, I will require the life of man. Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed. In the image of God he made man.

As for you, be fruitful and multiply, bring forth abundantly in the earth and multiply in it. The command is to multiply. The quickest way to disregard that command is to kill people when you're supposed to be multiplying people.

The command is make more people, not diminish the number of existing people. It's kind of a crude way of looking at it. But God says be fruitful and multiply, don't choose upsides and diminish.

Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed. This is a change, isn't it? This is a difference from the old system. What was the old system? Was there a trial? Was there a court? Was there a jury for Cain when he slew Abel? By that time, there were no doubt other children from Adam and Eve.

They could have gotten a nine-person jury. Adam and Eve could have gotten together and said, what are we going to do with this wayward son? Did God tell any human being to judge Cain, to render a sentence, to pass a verdict, to implement some sort of penalty? God Himself handled it, didn't He? All the way down, in that pre-flood circumstance, there's no indication that man was responsible for justice with his fellow man. This is a new thing after the flood.

God handled justice before that. In the same way, you had a centralized system, a national system for dealing with crime that was based on the nomadic and homogenous identity of Israel under Moses and under Joshua. Now that they are in the land, it is delegated.

There are going to be judges in the cities, the six cities of refuge, that will determine the difference between murder and manslaughter. This is a change. Again, it's the first order of business.

It's all about life and death. It's the most important issue. Satan is described as a

murderer from the beginning.

We have to distinguish between malice of forethought and an unintentional loss of life. That's the first thing. The first law passed in national Israel has to do with these cities of refuge.

This is a good place for us to pause and take our break. When we come back, we're going to look at the details of this implementation and figure out is there an application for us today for cities of refuge. What is the principle behind this? Why does God leave this in his word as written for our instruction? What are we supposed to do with this description and explanation of the cities of refuge? Does it have an application? I think you would suspect by now that it does.

That's what we'll endeavor to investigate when we come back.