



Conquering Canaan

Lesson 4: Dividing The Land

(Joshua 13:1-22:34)

God had promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to give the land of Canaan to their descendants. We have watched as Abraham had Isaac. Isaac had Jacob and Esau. Jacob had twelve sons. One of those twelve sons, Joseph, was sold into slavery and found himself in Egypt. Later, Pharaoh (the king of Egypt) chose Joseph to help people through a time of famine. In doing so, God used Joseph to save his family. Later, a new king saw the Israelites becoming a large nation and forced them to be slaves. But, God brought the Israelites out of Egypt. After the Israelites wandered in the wilderness for 40 years because of their disobedience to God, God brought them into the land of Canaan and Joshua led them to conquer the land.

Now, it was time for each Israelite tribe to receive their share of the land God had been promised them. Joshua was now an old man. And, although the Israelites had taken control of the land, there were still people living in the land who needed to be driven out and conquered. But, rather than all the Israelites fighting these people, it would be up to each tribe to finish driving the remaining people out of their land to conquer it all.

Although God promised to drive out the people who were left in the land, the Israelites did not finish the work. As the tribes were given their inheritance in the land, they would not completely drive the remaining people out. So, the remaining people would live among the Israelites in the land of Canaan. However, this was not pleasing to God and would cause them trouble later.

There were two and a half tribes that had already received their inheritances on the eastern side of the Jordan River while Moses was still living. These were the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh. The borders for their inheritance were clearly identified.

That meant there were nine and a half tribes that would receive inheritance in the land of Canaan. Remember, Jacob had twelve sons. The tribe of Levi would not receive the same kind of land inheritance as the other tribes since Levi's inheritance was the priesthood. So, although Levi was a tribe, it was a special tribe and was not considered in the same way as the other twelve. Also, Jacob gave Joseph a double inheritance in the land. Both of his sons (Ephraim and Manasseh) were given land and counted among the twelve tribes – just as if they were sons of Jacob.

Each of the nine and a half tribes would be given a turn to receive their inheritance. First, Judah received their inheritance (and Caleb received a special inheritance in Judah's land). Second, Ephraim and the other half of Manasseh were given their inheritances. Then, came Benjamin, Simeon, Zebulun, Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, and Dan.

After the land was divided among the tribes, Joshua was given the land he asked for (among the inheritance given to Ephraim, which was his own tribe). Following this, the cities of refuge were chosen. These were cities God had told Moses to set aside in the land of Canaan. They provided a safe place for people who accidentally killed someone else to live until they could be given a proper trial. No one was allowed to hurt them in these cities. So, three cities were chosen in Canaan and three more on the eastern side of the Jordan River had been chosen when Moses was living.

Finally, cities were chosen for the Levites to live in and pasturelands for all their animals. Although they were not given specific territory that only belonged to them, they were given cities and some land within the territory that was given to the other tribes. So, the Levites lived among all the other twelve tribes who had been given land and did the work God had given to them.

Therefore, God kept His promises to give the land of Canaan to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Israelites all went to their land and lived there. God gave them all rest from their enemies and gave their enemies over to them. God did not fail to keep any of the promises He had made!

Study Questions:

1) What did God promise Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?

2) How did the Israelites get to Canaan?

3) Did the Israelites drive all the people out of the land like God told them?

4) How many tribes lived on the eastern side of the Jordan River? Who were they?

5) How many tribes lived in the Canaan land? Who were they?

6) What were cities of refuge? How many were chosen?

7) Where did the Levites live? Why did they get a different inheritance?

8) Did God keep all His promises?

Memory Verse:

“There has been no day like it before or since, when the Lord listened to a man, because the Lord fought for Israel” (Joshua 10:14).

Draw a picture of the lesson you learned about: