

Joshua Chapters 16-19 – John Karmelich

1. We last left the Israelites busy distributing the land they have conquered. In this lesson, we continue that distribution process. The bad news of this lesson is not much good happens. These chapters are for the most part, a story of failure. (I'll explain more in a minute.) Therefore, this is a lesson that falls under the theme of "don't let this happen to you". Which reminds me, the title is, "The failure of the Israelites to finish conquering the land and what that means to us".
 - a) Let me start by asking a relating question to the believing Christian: What causes us to get our focus off of God? The answer is usually that the problems and issues we face are very visible. It's easy to get our focus off of God and onto our problems because what we face is "very visible" and right in front of us.
 - i) At the same time, to constantly trust in God means to constantly work at it. It means to regularly pray and regularly seek Him for help. All it takes is to get out of that habit and "real fast" trouble comes upon us.
 - b) On that happy note, ☺ let me explain what is going on with the Israelites and how that ties to the issue of keeping our focus on God. In this lesson, we are going to read of most of the twelve tribes of Israel receiving their promised inheritance. Like the last lesson, each tribe is going to get a carefully defined plot of land. Also like the last lesson, we are going to read a lot about "land markers" that mark boundaries.
 - i) What caught my eye as I read this text was the lack of anything good said. In the last lesson, we had the distribution to one particular tribe, which is the tribe of Judah. Mixed in with the story of Judah's inheritance, is the wonderful story of the inheritance of a man named Caleb and how he trusted God to lead him to victory.
 - c) In this lesson, we are going to read of other tribes of Israel failing to completely conquer the land assigned to them. Part of me wondered if part of the problem was Joshua's failure to raise up new leaders. After all, Joshua worked as an assistant to Moses for many years. The text next never mentions anyone who was Joshua's "next in line" assistant and I wonder if that was an issue. The text is silent on that issue. So we can't say with any certainty if Joshua was training up "tribal leaders" or not.
 - i) What is certain is that what we read in these chapters is that one time after another "x" tribe of Israel gets their land, and then they fail to conquer their territory.
 - ii) I do believe that much of the land of Israel was now empty from all the years of the Israelites killing their enemies. I suspect a lot of this "possession" taking was simply a manner of the Israelites, now divided by tribes, moving into the territory allotted to them.
 - iii) At the same time, we are going to get clues in this lesson that the Israelites compromised with what God wanted them to do.
 - iv) The mistake was the Israelites failed to completely drive out the inhabitants of the land of Israel. This mistake caused problems for many generations to come.
 - d) So what does this mean for you and me? What does their failure to conquer this land have to do with you and me, and our lives?
 - i) The underlying lesson here is that God wants us to work both as individuals and as groups to accomplish the things He wants to do through us. The Israelite failure to fully conquer the land is a lot like us, when we fail to fully do what God desires for our lives. Their failure could easily be our failure as well.
 - ii) Christianity is all about trusting God in every moment of our lives. Just because we did well "yesterday" may not help us with the issues we have to face today or tomorrow.

- iii) What these chapters do mean for you and me (as followers of Christ) is that He (God) wants us to live the full rich life that comes from trusting Him. It means that He wants our lives to have "purpose" and He wants to guide us in that "purpose" of making a difference for Him. In other words, just as God wanted the Israelites to "take" the land He has assigned to them, so God wants us to go "take" the life He desires for us.
- iv) Let me explain further: Paul teaches in the New Testament that some of us are called to be pastors, teachers, helpers, etc. (See Ephesians 4:11). God wants us to live a life to make a difference for Him. Does that mean we have to change jobs? For some the answer is yes, but for most the answer is no. The point is to seek God with the specific question of what do You want me to do with my life right now. Know that the answer God gives us today may be different than the one He gives us "tomorrow". The point is God wants us to make a difference for Him.
- v) God may be calling us into some specific ministry. That may mean for now, we have to do "x" as God is preparing us for some specific purpose down the road. God may be calling us to run a church one day, and for now, God just wants us to "sweep up" around the place. God may call us to be "big givers" one day, but for now, He just wants us to give a little to get accustomed to the idea of giving. My point is we don't know what the future holds for our life or how long of a life we have. We are just to move forward with what God calls for us today.
- vi) What if I have no idea what God wants for me? Let's say we have prayed and haven't got a great answer to what He wants for my life. Then it may be a simple matter of studying God's word, going about our lives and seeing what makes us "comfortable". I find that where God wants us "now" is someplace we can't stand "not being"! For example, one reason I write these studies every week, is I can't stand not doing it. You may find that you do something regularly for God because you can't stand not doing it. It is something that you just love to do or feel the need to do.

e) OK, on that convicting introduction, ☺ let's deal with the Israelites and land grants.

2. Chapter 16, Verse 1: The allotment for Joseph began at the Jordan of Jericho, east of the waters of Jericho, and went up from there through the desert into the hill country of Bethel. ² It went on from Bethel (that is, Luz), crossed over to the territory of the Arkites in Ataroth, ³ descended westward to the territory of the Japhletites as far as the region of Lower Beth Horon and on to Gezer, ending at the sea. ⁴ So Manasseh and Ephraim, the descendants of Joseph, received their inheritance.

- a) We are back to the topic of dividing up the land of Israel by tribe. The focus is on one of the twelve tribes named after its founder, Joseph. For those who don't remember, Joseph is one of 12 sons of Jacob and the father of his tribe. That tribe was legally "split in two tribes" as each of Joseph's two sons got an equal inheritance with Joseph's other 11 brothers. Remember that the tribe of Levi didn't get an equal share with the other tribes. In order for there to be "twelve tribes" inheriting the land, the tribe of Joseph got a "double portion" to make up for the fact that the tribe of Levi did not get "one twelfth" of the land.
 - i) So why did Joseph get a double portion? I suspect it was a reward as Joseph forgave his brothers and "led" them to Egypt roughly 400 years earlier.
 - ii) What's so special about the number "12"? Don't know, but God likes to work that way in the tribal divisions.
- b) With that said, Verses 1-3 give the boundaries of the tribe of Joseph (for both sons) within the Promised Land. Remember that one of Joseph's two sons was Manasseh. Half of the tribe of Manasseh settled outside of the land of Israel to the east. Therefore the next section is the breakdown of the land of Israel given to the other half of the tribe of Manasseh and all of the tribe of Ephraim. (These are the two sons of Joseph).

3. Verse 5: This was the territory of Ephraim, clan by clan: The boundary of their inheritance went from Ataroth Addar in the east to Upper Beth Horon ⁶ and continued to the sea. From Micmethath on the north it curved eastward to Taanath Shiloh, passing by it to Janoah on the east. ⁷ Then it went down from Janoah to Ataroth and Naarah, touched Jericho and came out at the Jordan. ⁸ From Tappuah the border went west to the Kanah Ravine and ended at the sea. This was the inheritance of the tribe of the Ephraimites, clan by clan. ⁹ It also included all the towns and their villages that were set aside for the Ephraimites within the inheritance of the Manassites.
- a) These verses focus on the geography of the land gives to the tribe of Ephraim. Again, Ephraim was one of the two sons of Joseph and Ephraim is of the tribes of Israel.
 - b) As I stated in the last lesson, my lessons are not designed to be geography lessons. I'm sure there are interesting "tidbits" about these geographical places, but to put it simply, that is not the focus of my lessons on the book of Joshua.
4. Verse 10: They did not dislodge the Canaanites living in Gezer; to this day the Canaanites live among the people of Ephraim but are required to do forced labor.
- a) In the final verse of this short chapter, we read that the tribe of Ephraim failed to kill all the people who lived in their allotted territory, but did require them to do force labor.
 - b) Remember that the word "Canaanites" is a generic word that described all the people living in what we call the land of Israel prior to the Israelites actually living there.
 - i) Therefore, when you read of those in the tribe of Ephraim failing to remove the Canaanites, we are reading about the same "generic" group of people of which God called on all the Israelites to completely destroy.
 - c) To state a principal I have not stated in a few lessons, God told Abraham over 400 years ago, that the sins of the Canaanites were not yet so bad that it was necessary to wipe out these people. (See Genesis 15:13-16). However, God is "limited" in His patience. The point is God gave this group (The Canaanites) a specific amount of time to see if that group will change their behavior. My point here is that God did not call the Israelites to kill all non-believers. However, God did call on the Israelites to perform this "mercy killing" on a specific group of people that, well, got so "disgusting" in their lifestyle, that it was a "mercy killing" to wipe them out. (See Deuteronomy 13:15 as a cross reference.)
 - i) I believe the sin of the Canaanites was offering human sacrifices to their false gods. I say that because eventually the Israelites compromised with the same sort of sin (many hundreds of years later) and the same way the Israelites were used by God to wipe out the inhabitants of the land, so God used the Babylonians to "clear out the land" of Israelites for their own similar sins.
 - d) OK, I've wondered off topic. Let me tie the text of this verse to this last point.
 - i) Back in the text, the topic is the descendants of Joseph and in particular is the tribe of Joseph's son Ephraim. God's orders were for the tribe of Ephraim to completely wipe out the Canaanites who live in their allotted area as a form of judgment.
 - ii) With that said, look at Verse 10 again. It says that the tribe of Ephraim forced the Canaanites to do "forced labor". That means two things:
 - a) First it means the tribe of Ephraim was stronger than the Canaanites because they did force them to do "forced labor". It is like saying to someone, "You can live, but you will be my slave and do what you say".
 - b) It also means that those of Ephraim "compromised" with God. The tribe of Ephraim was stronger than the Canaanites or else they wouldn't have put them to forced labor. However, they willfully disobeyed God by not putting this group of people to death.
 - iii) So isn't this a positive thing that the Jewish people were "merciful"? The answer is no. The issue is compromising with what God called us to do. God wanted to wipe them out goes back to the idea of allowing their "sinful practices" to continue.

5. Chapter 17, Verse 1: This was the allotment for the tribe of Manasseh as Joseph's firstborn, that is, for Makir, Manasseh's firstborn. Makir was the ancestor of the Gileadites, who had received Gilead and Bashan because the Makirites were great soldiers. ² So this allotment was for the rest of the people of Manasseh--the clans of Abiezer, Helek, Asriel, Shechem, Hephher and Shemida. These are the other male descendants of Manasseh son of Joseph by their clans.
- a) Meanwhile, we're back to distributing the land by tribe. Now we are focusing on the tribe of Manasseh. If you recall from previous lessons, half of the tribe of Manasseh wanted to settle east of the Jordan River, which is outside of Israel proper. Here is the allotment for the other half of the tribe of Manasseh that wanted to settle in the land of Israel itself.
 - b) Verse 1 says that "Makir" received Gilead and Bashan because "Makir" (a group of Israelites) were great soldiers. I believe that means they did well in the battles over the last seven years and therefore got some sort of "special reward" for their bravery.
 - i) The text doesn't say anything more about "Makir" and their bravery. I suspect it means that Joshua wanted them to "stand out" as to inspire the rest of the tribe to finish conquering their allotted territory.
6. Verse 3: Now Zelophehad son of Hephher, the son of Gilead, the son of Makir, the son of Manasseh, had no sons but only daughters, whose names were Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah and Tirzah. ⁴ They went to Eleazar the priest, Joshua son of Nun, and the leaders and said, "The LORD commanded Moses to give us an inheritance among our brothers." So Joshua gave them an inheritance along with the brothers of their father, according to the LORD's command. ⁵ Manasseh's share consisted of ten tracts of land besides Gilead and Bashan east of the Jordan, ⁶ because the daughters of the tribe of Manasseh received an inheritance among the sons. The land of Gilead belonged to the rest of the descendants of Manasseh.
- a) In Verses 3 through 6, we get a special "footnote" in the allotment of the tribe of Manasseh. There was a particular family in this tribe that had no sons, but only daughters. The point is land of Israel is supposed to be passed on to one's sons. If a family had no sons and if the daughters married Israelites of other tribes, then the Israelites of "other tribes" would get more land when the daughters marry those men of other tribes and lose some land.
 - i) In other words, a tribe could lose land if a family only had daughters.
 - ii) Back in Numbers 27, this guy named Zelophehad, who only had daughters, brought this issue up to Moses. Moses talked to God about it. The answer in essence is that if a family had only daughters, the daughters must marry within their own tribe. If a man had no sons or daughters, then the land would go to the nearest relative. All of this was to keep the size of each tribal territory the same.
 - iii) The point is to understand that the land being allotted is to remain as property of that particular tribe and God set up laws so that if a man only had a daughter(s), the land would stay as part of that tribe.
 - b) OK, other than knowing a "footnote" in Jewish history, why should I care? I am so glad you asked that. This "footnote" is actually necessary for the "birthright" of Jesus!
 - i) Jesus was from the tribe of Judah from both Mary's line and from Joseph's line. However, there was a curse on Joseph's line in which one of his ancestors was a Jewish king who was so wicked that God said through Jeremiah in effect that no son of this king would ever prosper. (Jeremiah 22:30). What that means is the virgin birth of Jesus was necessary in order to get around that curse.
 - ii) Jesus' mother Mary was also of the tribe of Judah, but her ancestral line was not part of the line of cursed kings of Israel. Mary was the daughter of a man named Heli. (See Luke 3:23 and know that the words "son of" is not in the original text). Mary got married to a man (Joseph) within the tribe of Judah as to not lose her tribal inheritance. Joseph was from the same tribe as Mary so no law was broken.
 - a) My point "so far" is that when Mary married Joseph, she did not break God's requirement of marrying within the same tribe.

- iii) By adoption laws (both Jewish and Roman), what was legally Mary's before the marriage, then legally becomes the property of her husband Joseph. When Joseph married Mary, her son Jesus legally became Joseph's son by adoption. At the same time Joseph got "around" the curse on the family line via the virgin birth. Therefore Jesus was the legal son of Joseph (by adoption) and was now "legally" part of the line of kings of which Joseph was a direct descendant.
 - c) OK John, so the virgin birth was necessary and it is partially due to this requirement of daughters marrying in their own tribe. How does this affect my life today? The short answer is if God goes to "this much trouble" in order to get around a curse, imagine how much trouble God is willing to go through in order to show His love to those who have committed their lives to following His Son.
 - i) The New Testament teaches that The Father shows His love for those who have love for His Son. (See John 14:21,23.) If we can trust the promise of Jesus being born to a virgin, then we can trust in the Father working in our lives to make a difference for Him if we are willing to make such a commitment.
 - ii) To put it another way, the same way God the Father goes to all of this "virgin trouble" for the sake of Jesus, so God goes to "just as much trouble" to watch out for the lives of those who have committed our lives to Him.
 - iii) Does this mean that if I follow Jesus, I will never have problems in my life? God never promises us that. God promises us He will give us comfort through whatever we are going through. He promises there are rewards for trusting Him.
 - iv) Think of it this way: The Israelites had to trust God to conquer this land. Were there still battles to fight? Of course. Where there still enemies who tried to kill the Israelites? Of course. God promised the Israelites the victory if they are willing to put their trust in Him. That is the same concept that God wants for us. He will give us victory over our "spiritual enemies" and the issues that separate us from Him if we are willing to trust in Him.
 - d) OK, enough happiness. ☺ Time to get back to splitting up the land of Israel.
- 7. Verse 7: The territory of Manasseh extended from Asher to Micmethath east of Shechem. The boundary ran southward from there to include the people living at En Tappuah. ⁸ (Manasseh had the land of Tappuah, but Tappuah itself, on the boundary of Manasseh, belonged to the Ephraimites.) ⁹ Then the boundary continued south to the Kanah Ravine. There were towns belonging to Ephraim lying among the towns of Manasseh, but the boundary of Manasseh was the northern side of the ravine and ended at the sea. ¹⁰ On the south the land belonged to Ephraim, on the north to Manasseh. The territory of Manasseh reached the sea and bordered Asher on the north and Issachar on the east.
 - a) Here we have more boundaries listed for the half-tribe of Manasseh to occupy. There is no commentary in this section, just a list of where the boundaries are.
 - b) Once again we have "towns to occupy". I suspect many of these towns are now empty due to the wars over the past seven years. The point is God gave the Israelites places to live. My point as I have stated before, is that trusting in God gives us a "rich, full life" and not some (spiritually speaking) "spot in the middle of the desert". Just as the rewards for the Israelites were good towns to occupy, so the rewards for those who trust in God is also "good places to live and make a difference for Him."
- 8. Verse 11: Within Issachar and Asher, Manasseh also had Beth Shan, Ibleam and the people of Dor, Endor, Taanach and Megiddo, together with their surrounding settlements (the third in the list is Naphoth). ¹² Yet the Manassites were not able to occupy these towns, for the Canaanites were determined to live in that region. ¹³ However, when the Israelites grew stronger, they subjected the Canaanites to forced labor but did not drive them out completely.
 - a) Here we have another footnote in that the Canaanites were not killed, but they were required to do forced labor. I've already commented on this issue, so I'll move on.

9. Verse 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 iron chariots, both those in Beth Shan and its settlements and those in the Valley of Jezreel." ¹⁷ But Joshua said to the house 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 iron chariots and though they are strong, you can drive them out."
- a) To summarize these five verses, the people of Joseph (i.e., the two tribes that are based on the two sons of Joseph) complained that their land allotment was not enough for them.
 - b) These two tribes were complaining to Joshua, who was in charge of dividing the land. Joshua responded to the charge by saying in effect, "If your land is too small for you, then go clear out the forest in your territory and use that land."
 - i) In other words, verse 15 mentions a specific forest. Joshua said to take the land God has given you and "clear it out" and then you will have plenty of land.
 - c) The point as it applies to us is what God gives us is usually "enough" for us, but often we have to "work" what God has given us in order to appreciate it.
 - i) In other words, we may be complaining that our ministry isn't big enough for us. God responds in effect to "harvest what you have and then we'll talk about getting a larger territory."
 - ii) As another example, we may be complaining to God about a specific problem or issue we are facing. God in effect can turn to us and say in effect, "Let Me (God) guide you through that problem and help you (and me) "clear out" those issues in order to enjoy the promises and the life that I have given you.
 - d) This leads me back to the text. These tribes complained that the people living there are powerful. They were complaining that the Canaanites who lived there have iron chariots. In other words, they are complaining they are not strong enough to drive them out.
 - i) First, a footnote: The "iron chariot" was sort of the ancient equivalent of a tank. It was a big chariot pulled by four horses and could do a lot of damages in a battle.
 - ii) The point for you and me is that these particular Israelites were getting their focus off of God and onto the enemy that was in front of them.
 - iii) If you (or I) focus on the size of our problems, they will become way too big for us to handle. It is only through God's help that we can overcome whatever issue or problem we have to face for the moment.
 - iv) Just as these Israelites feared the Canaanites in their "allotted territory" so we can have fears of whatever "territory" God wants us to focus upon. We can conquer the issues of our "territory", but it means trusting in God and letting Him lead us to defeat whatever issues are in front of us.
 - v) By the way, that trust does not mean our problems go away in 5 seconds when we are focusing on God. He has the power to make our issues "disappear" in five seconds or in five hundred years. The point is God works through us and He usually has a reason to work at the speed He wants to work at in our lives.
 - e) The point is we are reading about a lapse in faith right here. These Israelites were part of the same group who conquered the land of Israel earlier in the book and trusted God to get them this far. So why did they fear now? Faith in God is a continuous thing and we must continue to stay close to Him and draw upon His power and strength.
 - i) My point is trusting in God is a continuous thing and never gets easier. We can't rely on "yesterday's" miracles to get us through today's and tomorrow's issues.

10. Chapter 18, Verse 1: The whole assembly of the Israelites gathered at Shiloh and set up the Tent of Meeting there. The country was brought under their control,² but there were still seven Israelite tribes who had not yet received their inheritance.
- a) In terms of "land division", all we have done so far is distribute for the tribes of Judah (last lesson) and in this lesson, the two tribes of Joseph. (Also remember there are two and one half tribes that have settled east of the land of Israel.) That still leaves seven tribes to go.
 - b) It appears that representatives of these seven tribes were "grumbling" that they had not received a share of land as of yet. Joshua addresses this issue in the next verse.
11. Verse 3: So Joshua said to the Israelites: "How long will you wait before you begin to take possession of the land that the LORD, the God of your fathers, has given you?"⁴ Appoint three men from each tribe. I will send them out to make a survey of the land and to write a description of it, according to the inheritance of each. Then they will return to me.⁵ You are to divide the land into seven parts. Judah is to remain in its territory on the south and the house of Joseph in its territory on the north.⁶ After you have written descriptions of the seven parts of the land, bring them here to me and I will cast lots for you in the presence of the LORD our God.
- a) Let me paraphrase Joshua's instructions, "Each of the seven remaining tribes shall send out three men to survey the land and then report back to me. I (Joshua) have already distributed land to the tribe of Judah and to the two tribes of Joseph. For the remaining seven tribes, go do survey work and then I will "cast lots" for your territory."
 - b) To remember something from the last lesson, the idea of "casting lots" is similar to the idea of "throwing dice" in order to determine God's will. It was some sort of random luck type of method. I don't believe God calls Christians to settle issues the same way, in that Christians have the Spirit of God living inside of us. Therefore God wants us to use the Spirit to discern His will and not some sort of random luck method.
 - c) The main point of this section is that the remainder of the land to be divided will be done by "survey" work. The Israelites were to mark out boundaries of the remaining area and then they will look to God to actually divide up this land by this "casting lot" method.
 - d) So what does this mean to us? It means the territory God wants for us is sometimes "pre-marked" by God as in the case of the tribes of Judah and Joseph that have already gotten their land. In some cases, God wants us to go survey or "mark out" (i.e., go determine) what is the purpose of our lives for God and then "report back for duty".
 - i) Think of it this way: We usually don't know God's purpose for the rest our lives. However, we need to decide what to do for our lives "right here, right now".
 - ii) Sometimes that answer is obvious and the territory is "marked out for us" just like the tribes who have already received their inheritance.
 - iii) Sometimes we don't know what to do next in our life and we have to go do some "survey" work, to decide what to do next with our lives.
 - a) Examples could be finding a church or a place to live that is right for us. It could mind finding the right "group" to get involved with. It could be discovering what is the "mission" God wants for us, here and now.
 - iv) My point is that sometimes we have to do some "survey" work before we can settle into what God wants for us at this moment in time. Remember that God can't lead us unless we are willing to "move" and discover what is our "allotted territory".
12. Verse 7: The Levites, however, do not get a portion among you, because the priestly service of the LORD is their inheritance. And Gad, Reuben and the half-tribe of Manasseh have already received their inheritance on the east side of the Jordan. Moses the servant of the LORD gave it to them."
- a) Before we move on, we get another reminder that the tribe of Levite does not get a share of land as they were required to be priests. We also get another reminder that two and one half tribes decided to settle on the other side of the Jordan River. The point? The point is the land that is left is specifically for "you seven tribes" and no one else.

13. Verse 8: As the men started on their way to map out the land, Joshua instructed them, "Go and make a survey of the land and write a description of it. Then return to me, and I will cast lots for you here at Shiloh in the presence of the LORD."⁹ So the men left and went through the land. They wrote its description on a scroll, town by town, in seven parts, and returned to Joshua in the camp at Shiloh.¹⁰ Joshua then cast lots for them in Shiloh in the presence of the LORD, and there he distributed the land to the Israelites according to their tribal divisions.
- a) There is a time gap between Verse 7 and Verse 8. That is because in Verse 8 the "meeting with Joshua broke up" and the survey work had begun for these seven remaining tribes.
 - b) I have to admit I did wonder how they learned to survey. I suspect that many of these men learned "survey type skills" when they were young men during the period they were wandering in the desert. My simple point is we never know what knowledge we pick up in school or in life will come in handy one day!
 - i) When I was in school I struggled in English and I excelled in math! Now I write for a living and I write these studies as a ministry. My point is simply that we never know how God is going to use the skills and education He has given us.
 - c) Anyway, the rest of the land of Israel was now divided up as Joshua cast lots for each of the remaining tribes based on the survey work that was just completed.
14. Verse 11: The lot came up for the tribe of Benjamin, clan by clan. Their allotted territory lay between the tribes of Judah and Joseph:¹² On the north side their boundary began at the Jordan, passed the northern slope of Jericho and headed west into the hill country, coming out at the desert of Beth Aven.¹³ From there it crossed to the south slope of Luz (that is, Bethel) and went down to Ataroth Addar on the hill south of Lower Beth Horon.¹⁴ From the hill facing Beth Horon on the south the boundary turned south along the western side and came out at Kiriath Baal (that is, Kiriath Jearim), a town of the people of Judah. This was the western side.¹⁵ The southern side began at the outskirts of Kiriath Jearim on the west, and the boundary came out at the spring of the waters of Nephtoah.¹⁶ The boundary went down to the foot of the hill facing the Valley of Ben Hinnom, north of the Valley of Rephaim. It continued down the Hinnom Valley along the southern slope of the Jebusite city and so to En Rogel.¹⁷ It then curved north, went to En Shemesh, continued to Geliloth, which faces the Pass of Adummim, and ran down to the Stone of Bohan son of Reuben.¹⁸ It continued to the northern slope of Beth Arabah and on down into the Arabah.¹⁹ It then went to the northern slope of Beth Hoglah and came out at the northern bay of the Salt Sea, at the mouth of the Jordan in the south. This was the southern boundary.²⁰ The Jordan formed the boundary on the eastern side. These were the boundaries that marked out the inheritance of the clans of Benjamin on all sides.
- a) Here we have a lot of verses that focus on geography. The men who did the survey work named lots of natural boundary markers to form the area for the tribe of Benjamin.
 - b) Despite all of Israel's problems over the next half a millennium (or so), they still had these tribal territories. This lasted until after the time of King Solomon. The next king after Solomon caused a split and two Jewish countries were formed. There are clues that those Israelites who were loyal to God moved south to the new country of "Judah" and those who liked to "party" ☺ probably moved north the newly formed country of "Israel".
 - i) (See 2nd Chronicles 11:16 as a starting reference to this concept.)
 - ii) My sole point here is that this land division lasted for many centuries. That division does not exist today. One day, God will once again divide up Israel by tribe, although the boundaries will be different. (See Ezekiel Chapter 48).
15. Verse 21: The tribe of Benjamin, clan by clan, had the following cities: Jericho, Beth Hoglah, Emek Keziz,²² Beth Arabah, Zemaraim, Bethel,²³ Avvim, Parah, Ophrah,²⁴ Kephrah Ammoni, Ophni and Geba--twelve towns and their villages.²⁵ Gibeon, Ramah, Beeroth,²⁶ Mizpah, Kephirah, Mozah,²⁷ Rekem, Irpeel, Taralah,²⁸ Zelah, Haeleph, the Jebusite city (that is, Jerusalem), Gibeah and Kiriath--fourteen towns and their villages. This was the inheritance of Benjamin for its clans.

- a) In these last verses, we finish the division for the tribe of Benjamin. In these verses get a list of the existing towns for them to occupy. There is no mention of any enemy living in these towns and I wonder if they were already empty. The text does not say anything about any people left to conquer.
 - b) As you can tell, I'm moving fast through this section. I'm going to do the same for Chapter 19 as well. Most of Chapters 18 and 19 are simply lists of "geography" without a whole lot of commentary. The geography is important if one wants to study land boundaries. As far as what I want to accomplish with these bible studies they are "minor details" and therefore, I am running through them fairly quickly.
16. Chapter 19, Verse 1: The second lot came out for the tribe of Simeon, clan by clan. Their inheritance lay within the territory of Judah.² It included: Beersheba (or Sheba), Moladah,³ Hazar Shual, Balah, Ezem,⁴ Eltolad, Bethul, Hormah,⁵ Ziklag, Beth Marcaboth, Hazar Susah,⁶ Beth Lebaoth and Sharuhem--thirteen towns and their villages;⁷ Ain, Rimmon, Ether and Ashan--four towns and their villages--⁸ and all the villages around these towns as far as Baalath Beer (Ramah in the Negev). This was the inheritance of the tribe of the Simeonites, clan by clan.⁹ The inheritance of the Simeonites was taken from the share of Judah, because Judah's portion was more than they needed. So the Simeonites received their inheritance within the territory of Judah.
- a) Chapter 19 has nine verses for the tribe of Simeon. The most interesting thing I can say about this tribe is that its allotted area was small and its territory was taken from the area first given to the tribe of Judah. Notice Verse 9 says that the area for Judah was "too large" for them and they gave part of it to the tribe of Simeon.
 - i) Does that mean that Judah was simply being generous or does it mean they wanted help driving out the people there? I tend to take things at face value. It simply means that Judah had more than what they needed.
 - b) I also see this as a "Messianic Message". The promised Messiah (Jesus) came from the tribe of Judah. It is like saying, "You need more land, look to the Messiah" for help.
 - c) In a strange way, this territory allotted to the tribe of Simeon also fulfills a prediction about Simeon himself (who lived roughly 400 years earlier) by his father Jacob. Jacob gave predictions before his death about each of his sons. That included "clues" that the Messiah would come from the tribe of Judah. (See Genesis 49, Verses 8-10.)
 - d) My point here is that the predictions about both Levi and Simeon were (back in Genesis 49:7) that they would be "scattered through Israel". That prediction came true for Levi as they did not receive an inheritance and they were scattered all through Israel. It "sort of" came true for Simeon as well as their area is essentially "borrowed" from Judah and they got a small area which eventually got "swallowed up" by the area for the tribe of Judah.
17. Verse 10: The third lot came up for Zebulun, clan by clan: The boundary of their inheritance went as far as Sarid.¹¹ Going west it ran to Maralah, touched Dabbesheth, and extended to the ravine near Jokneam.¹² It turned east from Sarid toward the sunrise to the territory of Kisloth Tabor and went on to Daberath and up to Japhia.¹³ Then it continued eastward to Gath Hopher and Eth Kazin; it came out at Rimmon and turned toward Neah.¹⁴ There the boundary went around on the north to Hannathon and ended at the Valley of Iphtah El.¹⁵ Included were Kattath, Nahalal, Shimron, Idalah and Bethlehem. There were twelve towns and their villages.¹⁶ These towns and their villages were the inheritance of Zebulun, clan by clan.
- a) These verses cover the tribe of Zebulun.
 - b) Of all the chapters in the book of Joshua, the one I found the least amount of application to our lives is Chapter 19. It is, for the most part, simply a list of areas and cities that the last seven tribes get. So if Chapter 19 it is just a "list", why is it in the bible?
 - i) Remember that the intended audience for this book was the Jewish people living at the time of Joshua. It was for them to know the area assigned to each tribe. The application to us is that it shows that God fulfills His Promises as He promised to give the land to the Israelites by tribe.

18. Verse 17: The fourth lot came out for Issachar, clan by clan. ¹⁸ Their territory included: Jezreel, Kesulloth, Shunem, ¹⁹ Hapharaim, Shion, Anaharath, ²⁰ Rabbith, Kishion, Ebez, ²¹ Remeth, En Gannim, En Haddah and Beth Pazzez. ²² The boundary touched Tabor, Shahazumah and Beth Shemesh, and ended at the Jordan. There were sixteen towns and their villages. ²³ These towns and their villages were the inheritance of the tribe of Issachar, clan by clan.
- a) These seven verses cover the tribe of Issachar. I'm going to get through the rest of the text fairly quickly and then summarize some key points about this text and this lesson.
19. Verse 24: The fifth lot came out for the tribe of Asher, clan by clan. ²⁵ Their territory included: Helkath, Hali, Beten, Acshaph, ²⁶ Allammelech, Amad and Mishal. On the west the boundary touched Carmel and Shihor Libnath. ²⁷ It then turned east toward Beth Dagon, touched Zebulun and the Valley of Iphtah EL, and went north to Beth Emek and Neiel, passing Cabul on the left. ²⁸ It went to Abdon, Rehob, Hammon and Kanah, as far as Greater Sidon. ²⁹ The boundary then turned back toward Ramah and went to the fortified city of Tyre, turned toward Hosah and came out at the sea in the region of Aczib, ³⁰ Ummah, Aphek and Rehob. There were twenty-two towns and their villages. ³¹ These towns and their villages were the inheritance of the tribe of Asher, clan by clan.
- a) These verses cover the tribe of Asher. Just to give us a quick "break" from this monotony, notice the word "lots" at the beginning of each of this section of tribal division. That means that whatever random luck method of determining God's will was in a certain order and somehow Asher's lot came up the fifth time. We will get "seven" of these based on the land distribution of the final seven tribes of Israel in this chapter.
20. Verse 32: The sixth lot came out for Naphtali, clan by clan: ³³ Their boundary went from Heleph and the large tree in Zaanannim, passing Adami Nekeb and Jabneel to Lakkum and ending at the Jordan. ³⁴ The boundary ran west through Aznoth Tabor and came out at Hukkok. It touched Zebulun on the south, Asher on the west and the Jordan on the east. ³⁵ The fortified cities were Ziddim, Zer, Hammath, Rakkath, Kinnereth, ³⁶ Adamah, Ramah, Hazor, ³⁷ Kedesh, Edrei, En Hazor, ³⁸ Iron, Migdal El, Horem, Beth Anath and Beth Shemesh. There were nineteen towns and their villages. ³⁹ These towns and their villages were the inheritance of the tribe of Naphtali, clan by clan.
- a) The sixth lot was for the tribe of Naphtali.
- b) Time for another reminder: None of the Israelites living today can know what tribe they were from. That is because the last Jewish temple had all of the family records and that temple was burnt to the ground by the Romans in 70AD. Still, one day the Israelites are going to be gathered again tribe by tribe (See Ezekiel Chapter 48). Then, the borders will be different. So if none of this stuff affects even the modern Israelites, why should I care?
- i) The short answer is this chapter did not have the modern non-Israelite in mind when it was included. The point to learn is that God cares about all people, and God made a promise to the Israelites (to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) that their descendents would inherit this land. Therefore, the division shows us that God keeps His unconditional promises even when they (or us) are not obedient to Him!
- c) The fact that each tribe received a well-defined area is proof of how God keeps His promises and now it is up to the Israelites to actually go out and take the land promised to them. In other words, the Israelites must "claim" the promises made to them by God just as the Christian must go and "claim" the promises made to us through Jesus.
- i) So what are the Christian promises? The idea that we can have a meaningful life and a life that makes a difference for God and we can draw close to Him. Speaking as one who has done a lot of "things" in my life, there is no greater joy than knowing and "doing" things that make an eternal difference by living for God in all that we do.

21. Verse 40: The seventh lot came out for the tribe of Dan, clan by clan. ⁴¹ The territory of their inheritance included: Zorah, Eshtaol, Ir Shemesh, ⁴² Shaalabbin, Aijalon, Ithlah, ⁴³ Elon, Timnah, Ekron, ⁴⁴ Eltekeh, Gibbethon, Baalath, ⁴⁵ Jehud, Bene Berak, Gath Rimmon, ⁴⁶ Me Jarkon and Rakkon, with the area facing Joppa. ⁴⁷ (But the Danites had difficulty taking possession of their territory, so they went up and attacked Leshem, took it, put it to the sword and occupied it. They settled in Leshem and named it Dan after their forefather.) ⁴⁸ These towns and their villages were the inheritance of the tribe of Dan, clan by clan.
- a) The tribe of Dan here is the final tribe distribution. If one studies the references to the tribe of Dan throughout the bible, you will notice that tribe sort of get the "back of the hand" treatment by God (i.e., subtle insults).
 - i) The most famous of these "put downs" in the New Testament in the book of Revelation Chapter 7. God promises that representatives from each tribe will be His witnesses in the end times, except if you read that chapter carefully, the tribe of Dan is excluded.
 - ii) So what did "Dan" do to get this treatment? A clue is in this text here in Joshua. The text says in effect that the tribe of Dan had difficulty taking the territory given to them. That means they failed to conquer who was living there. Because they could not conquer it, the tribe of Dan took a different territory further north.
 - iii) In other words, the tribe of Dan didn't live in the area allotted to them, but ended up settling in an area north of "Israel proper".
 - iv) What the tribe of Dan also did that got them the "long term back of the hand" is that "idolatry" to the nation of Israel is estimated to first come through the tribe of Dan. (See Judges 18:30-31.) It is God's way of saying "beware of idolatry" and let me (God) use Dan as an example of what happens to you when you allow the worship of "other gods" to be mixed in with the worship of the "true God".
 - b) The point to you and me is that when we fail to do what God asks us to do, there are usually long-term consequences when we fail to listen to God and do what He asks.
 - c) Just so you know, in the "future distribution" of the land as described in Ezekiel Chapter 48, the tribe of Dan is "forgiven" in the sense they do get a share of land.
22. Verse 49: When they had finished dividing the land into its allotted portions, the Israelites gave Joshua son of Nun an inheritance among them, ⁵⁰ as the LORD had commanded. They gave him the town he asked for--Timnath Serah in the hill country of Ephraim. And he built up the town and settled there.
- a) The last piece of real estate to carve up was for Joshua himself. Joshua put himself last as to be above the suspicion that he was saving something special for himself.
 - b) Joshua happened to be from the tribe of Ephraim (See Numbers 13:8 and 13:16). The piece of land Joshua took for himself was part of the inheritance of that tribe.
 - c) In a similar way to the fact that Caleb (last lesson) took land that was unconquered and went in and conquered it himself or lead an army, so Joshua, in his old age, led a charge to conquer this area and "built up the town".
 - i) My point here, like most of the lesson, is that this history of Israel is a history of failure. (For example, Dan failed to take the land promised to him, and instead he took an "easier" piece of land.) The sole exception in four chapters is the leader Joshua. Despite all of the failures of the tribes of Israel in this section, Joshua, in his old age (probably close to 100), was still trusting in God and used God's strength to take the piece of land that was carved out for him.
23. Verse 51: These are the territories that Eleazar the priest, Joshua son of Nun and the heads of the tribal clans of Israel assigned by lot at Shiloh in the presence of the LORD at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. And so they finished dividing the land.
- a) This verse essentially says that the head priest (Eleazar) and the civil leader, Joshua finished the job that God told them to do, which is divide up the land by tribes.

- b) So why don't we read of more success of the Israelites? After all, this land was mostly empty as most of the inhabitants were killed in the wars over the last seven years. Why don't we read in Joshua and the next few books of the bible of the Israelites "wiping out" the remaining inhabitants of the land and living the type of life God desires for them? That is the type of life is a close personal relationship with God and trusting Him to give us victories over the enemies and issues we have to face in our life.
- i) The same question can be asked of you and me. We know that God desires that we draw close to Him and not face our problems and issues alone. We daily need to pray for God's protection and daily need to pray that God help us live the type of life God wants for us.
 - ii) My question is really, why doesn't this lifestyle (as a Christian) ever get any easier? For these Israelites, after seven years of fighting, there are still more places and people to fight. In the spiritual sense, there are always going to be more "wars" that they (and us) have to fight in terms of things that separate us from God. Ask those who have been Christians a long time and they will tell you it "never gets any easier" in that we still have to trust in God in the latter years of our life.
 - iii) The answer this issue another way, the temptation to sin is always in eyesight or in reach. The problems we face in life are always right in front of us and the God we worship is not visible. The problem is that sin still exists in this world and no matter how close we draw to God, we still have to deal with the issue and consequences of sin.
 - iv) My point for the Israelites is that even after years of fighting, they still had natural internal fears, which got them to fail to fully trust God. In the same manner, we Christians at any time can easily get our focus off of Him and onto the problems that are right in front of us.
- c) So, is there a happy ending for this story? Sure there is and His name is Jesus Christ. No matter how much we "blow it", we are 100% forgiven of our sins as long as we are trusting in Jesus payment for our sins. If that is true, why worry about all of this stuff about pleasing God and worrying about sin in our life? The answer is, even though we are saved, God does not want us to "wallow in our sins" and keep on living the way we have been living. We are to constantly strive to not sin and live the type of life that God wants us to live. Not that we can "gain points" with God or get more rewards in heaven. We can't get any more saved than we are when we first believed. What we can do is be a better witness for God in the time given to us with in this present life.
- d) There, now that I've cheered us all up, ☺ I can close this out in prayer.
24. Father, thank you for what you have taught us about trusting You. Help us to always remember that You are always a prayer away. Throughout our day and throughout our lives, we have to face sin issues and problems that draw us away from You. Help us to rely on Your grace and trust that You are working all things out for Your glory. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.