

The Book of Joshua

LESSON
THREE

Tribal Inheritances Discussion Forum



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The Book of Joshua

Lesson Three: Tribal Inheritances

Discussion Forum

With

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Question 1:

Why were the promises of the Abrahamic covenant so important for Joshua and Israel as they secured the boundaries of their inheritance?

Rev. Kevin Labby

Back in the book of Genesis, God establishes a covenant relationship with Abraham, and he promised to Abraham four great blessings, the first one being that he would be the father of a great nation, that his descendants would number like the stars in the sky or the sand on the seashore. And in the book of Joshua, of course, we've seen that. We've seen it earlier, but God's people are numerous; they're a great nation. The second thing that he promised was a land for those people in which they could dwell, and of course in Joshua, in those particular chapters, we see them taking possession of the land and distributing it. So, there's another aspect of the Abrahamic covenant being fulfilled. A third promise there is that God will protect Abraham's descendants, that he will be their God, they will be his people, he'll be their shield and defender, and of course, everything we've read in the book of Joshua up to that point shows that God is the Lord of Hosts and is fighting with them and for them as they take possession of the land. And then, finally, there's that great promise to Abraham that out of that nation of whom he's a father, God will send forth a Messiah to redeem; he'll be a blessing to all nations... One of the clearest foreshadowings of Christ in all of the Old Testament is in the book of Joshua, in the person of Joshua, who leads God's people in a great deal of righteousness and faithfulness to God, trusting in him, and leading them in procession to take possession of that which is theirs according to God's grace.

Dr. Tom Petter

A covenant is a set of rules that governs the life of ancient Israel. And the primary covenant that governs the life of ancient Israel in the Old Testament is the covenant made at Sinai with Moses, the covenant of Sinai. Sometimes people call it "covenant of Moses," "Mosaic covenant." And that's a set of rules and regulations that govern

the life of Israel. But you can't understand Sinai without going further back and understand where at Sinai, how it fits within the Israelite history, and it comes from the Abrahamic covenant, the covenant made with Abraham. And so, starting there, the covenant made with the towering tribal figure of Abraham is one where God makes a promise to him, and he says, "This is what I'm going to do for you: I'm going to give you a progeny, lots of children, and they're going to become a nation. And I'm going to give you a land where these people can live." ... And of course, when they come into the land of Canaan that God gives them, the Promised Land, the land promised to Abraham, when you fast-forward the storyline to the time of Joshua and when they conquer the land, and you read the story with this lens, you realize it was really God's doing, God's promise. And so, that's the foundation.

Prof. Dwi Maria Handayani, translation

It was very important for the nation of Israel to realize that the land they received was the land that was the fulfillment of God's promise. It was not land that they had obtained on their own just because they wanted it or because they had fought for it. It was given by God. Before they even knew about the existence of that land, the Lord had promised it to Abraham. That was a lasting promise to his descendants, and now they were the ones who were inheriting that promise. And this is what Joshua kept telling them. He reminded them continually that this was the land that had already been promised to their ancestors, and now they were receiving it... And that promise of the land didn't stop at the nation of Israel alone, but it's also given to Abraham's descendants, even in the church today, to us, to you and me who believe in the Lord. Through Jesus we will receive that promised inheritance — an eternal salvation that is unconditional in nature, which God has given to us, to each person who confesses that they believe — because *we* are the descendants of Abraham, the father of everyone who believes.

Question 2:

What does the narrative of Israel's tribal inheritances in the book of Joshua teach us about God's faithfulness to his covenant?

Dr. James M. Hamilton

In Joshua 13–22, we see the Lord upholding his end of the bargain, so to speak. And in that way the book is emphasizing the covenant that God has made with Israel because it's showing the Lord being faithful to what he's promised to do. In fact, there's this remarkable statement here in Joshua 21:43 where the text reads:

Thus the Lord gave to Israel all the land that he swore to give to their fathers. And they took possession of it, and they settled there (Joshua 21:43).

And then it goes on, and in verse 45 it says,

Not one word of all the good promises that the Lord had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass (Joshua 21:45).

And so, the book of Joshua, by showing Israel conquering the land and then apportioning the land among the tribes, it's being emphasized that the Lord is giving them exactly what he promised to give them, and he's bringing to pass everything that he said he would do. And in that way it's almost putting the ball in Israel's court, so to speak. It's putting the onus now on Israel to uphold their end of the bargain and to bring the character and likeness of God to bear on all they do in the land, and then as they seek to expand the borders of the land given to them, they're to make God known. And so, in this way, I think the book of Joshua is showing the Lord as a faithful member of the covenant. He's a covenant-keeper by bringing his word to pass.

Pastor Ornan Cruz, translation

These are the chapters of the distribution of the land. Joshua 13–21 narrate the whole episode of the distribution of the Promised Land, and in these chapters we're seeing the faithfulness of God to his covenant, and we're seeing him fulfilling his promise from as early as the time of Genesis 12, when the Lord called Abraham and told him, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you." This covenant with Abraham was remembered over and over, and God told the nation of Israel all the time, "I will give you a land." So, when the time of the conquest came, the people had to keep trusting in God's faithfulness... And the people, without a doubt, would be remembering that God was fulfilling his covenant promise. In faithfulness and loyalty to his commitment, the beautiful time had arrived that their ancestors had longed for but weren't able to see. This is the relationship of these chapters with God's covenant.

Prof. Dwi Maria Handayani, translation

The book of Joshua is, basically, a book that tells about the covenant. God keeps his covenant. Beginning with the first chapter, the Lord said to Joshua, he reminded him that what Joshua was going to go through was part of the covenant that God had given to his predecessors — to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob, and now, to Moses, and now, also, Joshua was the one chosen by God to claim God's promise. And if we continue to read chapter after chapter, the covenant is always repeated by God. In fact, even in chapter 1, the Lord reminded Joshua, commanded Joshua to remind the nation of Israel, not to forget the law of Moses. And we know the law of Moses is part of God's covenant. And then, in chapter 7 — Achan's sin — God said that that sin was not merely an ordinary sin, but it was sin because it violated God's covenant. And then, in chapter 8, Joshua instructed the nation of Israel to remember God's covenant on Mount Ebal, and there he wrote again God's covenant and read it to the whole nation of Israel. In chapters 13–21, which was the division of the land, there was the climax of the fulfillment of that promise — not only the promise of land but, as it turns out, also the promise of offspring from one man, Abraham, now becoming one nation, twelve tribes, and also the promise of land that now was truly given by God to them. Each tribe possessed their own land and they enjoyed the promise that

God had given to the nation of Israel. So, the book of Joshua, if we read it from chapter 1 to the last chapter, all of it talks about God's covenant.

Question 3:

How does the book of Joshua emphasize the inclusion of "all Israel" in the Promised Land?

Rev. Sherif Gendy, translation

The book of Joshua emphasizes the inclusion of "all Israel," complete unity in the Promised Land, in various ways. First, this expression, "all Israel," is repeated many times in the book, either relating to conquering the land or distributing it. And it was very important that the people of Israel be unified in their behavior and in the events that happened, because through their unity the Lord's victory was assured. So, the unity here was related to wars and their behavior before the Lord. But also, the unity is related to sin. When an Israelite sinned, the consequence was that all the people were affected somehow by this sin. For example, we read in Joshua 7:1:

But the people of Israel broke faith in regard to the devoted things, for Achan the son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took some of the devoted things. And the anger of the Lord burned against the people of Israel (Joshua 7:1).

Note here the explanation given by the Scriptures that "the people of Israel" broke faith in regard to the devoted things. Actually, the one who stole and broke faith was Achan son of Carmi, and he was mentioned by name. But it asserts here that the punishment of this sin and its consequences included all Israel — not only in the punishment, but in the sin itself. In the sight of the Lord, all of Israel cooperated in it. For that reason, the people of Israel broke faith, and the anger of the Lord burned against Israel. So, the union here is not only related to conquering and distributing the land, but also to the sinful behavior, in the sight of the Lord, that all Israel cooperated in... The issue also is related to the covenant, because all Israel had a role in their commitment to the covenant before the Lord. That's why we read, for example, that Joshua gathered all Israel, gathered all the tribes of Israel in 23:2 and 24:1. He gathered all the people, all Israel, to renew the covenant with them before the Lord, and to remind them of the warnings related to the covenant that the Lord had made with them. So, the unity of Israel was part of proclaiming their loyalty to the Lord within the covenant. That is why it was very important that all the people be unified, whether in war, worship, or devotion to the Lord.

Dr. Seth Tarrer

Well, the book of Joshua at the textual level uses this phrase: "all Israel," "all of Israel," over sixteen times, and the idea of this is to drive home to the reader the unity and the cohesive nature of the binding requirements the Lord is placing upon Israel. Not only that, the notion that the Lord is with, not only Joshua, the Lord is with all of

Israel, and as such, all of God's promises and blessings are promised to Israel, as are God's warnings, and is the contingent nature of Israel's response of obedience in faith to the Lord's commands. So, this phrase "all Israel" then serves at the textual level to hold all of Israel accountable before the Lord as they move into the Promised Land. This will not be done by a single figure. This will be an event in which the entirety of the nation of Israel is to take place. Now, when we look at this thematically, a story that very clearly pops to mind is the story of the sin of Achan in Joshua 7... And interestingly when we look at the story of Achan, we see all of Israel held accountable for the sin of Achan. Now, symbolically, Achan and his entire family, and everything that he owned is destroyed. So, in some sense Achan pays for his sin through the death of his family and himself. However, all of Israel is called on to bear witness to this, and all of Israel cannot move forward until the sin of Achan is dealt with. Now, all of Israel is also called to remember the sin of Achan. This is not something that can be forgotten and dusted and swept under the carpet. Israel must live with this before itself, and this is seen in two different ways. The first is that the name "Achan" is closely associated with the noun *akar* (אָכַר), right, which means "trouble," which, when we get into 1 Kings, you see King Ahab calling the prophet Elijah "a troubler," right, to which Elijah turns around and calls Ahab the troubler. Either way, in the Hebrew language and throughout the Hebrew story, this notion of *akar*, related etymologically to Achan, lives on, is remembered as the troubler. So, all of Israel is called to constantly remember the sin of Achan through the use of this name.

Secondly, we see that ... the sin of Achan is to be memorialized, in the same way that the crossing of the Jordan was memorialized, with the heaping of stones, and in the same ways we'll see the Transjordan tribes raise a stone to express their unity with the other tribes, so too is the sin of Achan held before all of Israel in a physical monument, which is this stone pile raised to commemorate the sin of Achan. And interestingly, here the text tells us that in his sin Achan has "crossed over." What has he crossed over? In the same way the Israelites crossed over the Jordan River, Achan has crossed over. He has violated the covenant commands of the Lord in disobeying God and hiding loot. So, Israel, all of Israel, is called to remember, through the use of these visible symbols, Israel is called to remember the sin of Achan. All of Israel had to deal with Achan's sin. All of Israel stands before the Lord. And all of Israel must give account for her obedience or lack thereof... There are two other ways in which all of Israel is highlighted... As Israel moves into the Promised Land, all of Israel is to be cared for, not some of Israel, not the leaders, not a particular class or tribe. All of Israel is made much of in the book of Joshua... Two examples in which the Lord cares for all of Israel, not just some of Israel, can be found in Deuteronomy 25 and Leviticus 25. In Deuteronomy 25, we have Levirate marriage vows. In this case, should a woman's husband die, the nearest brother of her husband is to take her as his wife in order to perpetuate the family name. And in this we see, as Israel moves into the Promised Land, the least of the community, those who are most vulnerable, those who are most likely to be forgotten or marginalized, are to be cared for. There are provisions made for all of Israel. Secondly, we see in Leviticus 25, here the land is cared for. A major ingredient and component of Israel was the geographical location — their land. This is the inherited, promised, covenantal blessing of the land. The

land is to be cared for. So, should a member of Israel lose their land due to hard times financially or some disadvantageous situation, their nearest kin was to step in and care for them. These are just two examples of which the Lord has continually made provision, not for some of Israel, but for all of Israel.

Question 4:

What is the significance of the specific tribal allotments found in the book of Joshua?

Dr. Tom Petter

Well, Joshua, the book, we think it's all about the conquest, and we think it's all about Joshua taking all these cities, but a significant part of the book is about tribal boundaries, tribal allotments — who gets what among the twelve tribes. And so, it's a significant part of the book. Starting in chapter 12, it's very boring. It reads like an accountant's record, and it's about who gets what part of the land in very, very specific terms. So, Judah, you read about the boundaries of Judah, you read about the boundaries of Simeon, so it has to do with a topographical mapping of the land. And I think the degree of specificity for us as modern readers is lost on us. We think, "Oh, it's boring. Let's skip these chapters," as we read Joshua. But I think they're very important because what they're telling us is Yahweh is giving the land to the people in very specific terms, and these boundaries of the land, who gets what — Ephraim, Manasseh, Dan, and all these tribes — who gets what matters immensely to Yahweh because it's about his land. Again, it goes back to the sacredness of this space, and the best way to imagine this is the parallel with the tabernacle in the wilderness. The tabernacle has specific measurements, and there's specific parts that belonged to certain groups of Levites to carry. It's very specific. You can't touch certain things. And then the dimensions are very tight. And this is Yahweh's sacred space. That ambulant tent moves about, and it's Yahweh's sacred space. Now, the sacred space of Yahweh, where Yahweh meets with his people, has become a land. It's static; it's a piece of geography. And so, the holy sacred space of Yahweh that was the tabernacle becomes a landscape with mountains and rivers and fields, and it becomes apportioned in very, very specific terms just like the tabernacle. And then you see later on in Israelite history that you do not mess with tribal inheritance. This is something that Yahweh gave to the tribes. And some kings will flex their muscles to steal land from other people, and they get condemned for that — Ahab and Jezebel comes to mind with Naboth's vineyard. You cannot steal somebody else's land because it's holy space — holy, apportioned to the Israelites. And, of course, this issue has to do with inheritance, what's being passed on to the next generation. An inheritance is very sacred in Israelite history, and in Yahweh's mind, because it's preparing the way for the redemption that comes through Christ. So, very sacred.

Prof. Dwi Maria Handayani, translation

The division of the land in the book of Joshua was something that was very important because that division of the land proved that the Lord actually fulfilled his promise.

Not just one tribe or two tribes, but all tribes, the entire nation of Israel received their share. And because of that, each of these tribes then became a part of the community that was tied exclusively to the Lord. They had responsibilities toward God, and they enjoyed every blessing that the Lord gave them. So, this division of the land was something that was very important, very crucial in the book of Joshua, proving that God did not forget even one of his children. Every tribe received the inheritance that God had promised them.

Dr. Richard L. Pratt, Jr.

As the writer of Joshua lifts up a model for how he wants his audience to reaffirm what God wants for the people of God, so that they can move the kingdom forward, one of the things he does is he wants, first, every tribe to know what part of the Promised Land they are to possess. They're to go back there; they're to occupy it again. It is to be their orientation in life, and from there they're to build out. But even more than that, Israel as a whole, the whole nation is to respect those allocations of land that were given to the people of God and various tribes, so that even in a book like Chronicles, you find there's a great deal of emphasis on all twelve tribes returning to the place that God had given to them. And this, of course, emphasizes the unity of the people of God, it emphasizes their diversity within that unity, it also emphasizes how important every single tribe of Israel was to the plan of God, and thus it helps us, even as Christians, to understand why Jesus did not simply live his entire life in Judah. He did not live his entire life in Jerusalem, the capital city, but actually traversed up north and went through all the tribal regions of Israel, including the tribal regions across the Jordan... If you're going to rebuild the kingdom of God, as Jesus was determined to do in his day, then you must go back, as it were, and reaffirm the starting point. And the starting point was that these were the areas where God's people were to settle, and the tribes were to identify themselves as part of the larger people of God with their own gifts, their own inheritance, their own responsibilities within the Land of Promise. And Jesus did that as he gathered a remnant from all the various regions of the Promised Land from all the tribes of Israel.

Question 5:

Why did the tribe of Levi receive no land inheritance?

Dr. Seth Tarrer

In the book of Joshua, each of the twelve tribes receive an allotment of land once they enter into the Promised Land, or in the case of the Transjordan tribes, on the other side of the Jordan. However, one of the twelve tribes, the priestly tribe, the Levites, did not receive an allotment of land, per se. And so, right away we see that this tribe of the Levites was categorically different than the other tribes, the other eleven tribes. As such, their interaction with the Promised Land and their value therein is going to be categorically different as well. As we mentioned, all eleven receive an allotment of land. The Levites receive, per the text, "offerings by fire." Their inheritance is not

land; their inheritance is deemed an offering of fire. Now this phrase is used throughout Leviticus 1–7, and it denotes various kinds of burnt offerings. It can also denote other types of offerings, grain and gift offerings as well. But the idea is that Israel’s priestly tribe will be interacting and symbolically different than the other tribes in the Promised Land... Further stipulations for the Levites in the Promised Land are given in Deuteronomy 18:1, 2... In Deuteronomy 18:1, 2, we’re told that the Levites are going to live off of their neighbors’ sacrifices. Their livelihood will not come from their working their own particular plot of land. It will come from the sacrifices of the Israelites as they come in obedience to worship of the Lord. And in verse 2 of Deuteronomy 18, we’re told the Levites’ inheritance itself will be the Lord — “The Lord himself will be your inheritance.” ... In chapter 21 of Joshua, we’re told that the Levites, instead of being given one land that belongs to their tribe, they are given cities inside of the other tribes’ land. In these cities, the Levites can live, receive sacrifices and live off the neighbors’ sacrifices that are brought to them. They also are allowed to raise cattle for their own consumption on some land outside of the city. And so, again, we see that the Levites interaction with the Promised Land is categorically different than the other tribes... The designation of these tribal cities for the Levites in chapter 21 has this dual effect on this different category of tribe, these Levites. The first effect that it has on the Levites is that it severely limits their possessions, physically underscoring the fact that all that they’ve received, all that Israel has received, is from the hand of the Lord. It’s not their own doing. So, the first effect of the Levites simply inheriting cities as opposed to an entire land is that they’re reliant upon others. The second effect is that the Levites themselves physically become symbols, symbols of God’s presence, first of all locally among the other tribes, and then Israel becomes a symbol of God’s presence amongst neighbors who do not worship the Lord. The Levites become these constant physical, tangible reminders of Israel’s devotion exclusively to the Lord and reminders and encouragement that, in fact, the Lord is devoted to Israel as well and has placed his representative, the Levites, those who commune with him directly, in their midst for their good.

Pastor Ornan Cruz, translation

The people of the tribe of Levi were the ministers of God among the nation. Some in Aaron’s family were priests who ministered in the temple. Others were singers, water carriers, but in one way or another, they were the ministers of God. So, when the distribution of the land came, they gave no land to the Levites. Instead, they received a tithe from all the other nations, from their brothers. The tithe of their brothers was for the tribe to maintain itself. And at the same time, they would receive land and cities from their brothers. This was God’s way of saying that he didn’t want his ministers to be isolated from the people, that he wanted his ministers to be among the people. It’s interesting to see that God graciously placed his ministers among the people. But then, in Numbers 3:12, 13 there is a very interesting text. God says that he had consecrated all the firstborn sons of the animals and people to himself once they were free from slavery in Egypt... Then God raised the Levites as substitutes for all the firstborn in the rest of the tribes, and he says in this text, “[They] shall be mine,

for all the firstborn are mine.” This was a special way of being dedicated to God. It was a special way to serve him and to serve among their brothers.

Rev. Michael J. Glodo

When we read of the apportionment of the land in Joshua, we find that the tribe of Levi was not given an apportionment of the land. And this is because the tribe of Levi belonged peculiarly, especially, to the Lord. Going back to Exodus 12 where the firstborn of every Israelite household was redeemed by the substitute of the Passover lamb, every firstborn of every Israelite household belonged to the Lord. But instead of taking the firstborn of every Israelite household into his tribal service, God gathered, as a substitute for the firstborn, the whole tribe of Levi. So, the whole tribe of Levi belongs peculiarly and especially to God in the service of the tabernacle and all of the worship that went with it. And you even see in the book of Numbers how the counting of the firstborn is calculated in relation to the number of the tribe of Levi so that there is to be a specific one-to-one correspondence. But it would be remiss to say that Levi had no inheritance. Even though they didn't have land given to them specifically, they had the land of the tabernacle, they had the vicinity of the tabernacle. In fact, they had God himself as their inheritance, as they belonged to him as the tribe set apart for priestly service.

Question 6:

Why did Ephraim and Manasseh each receive an inheritance even though they were Joseph's sons and not Israel's sons?

Dr. Chip McDaniel

The custom of that day was that the eldest son could expect two rights as the eldest son. The first of these was the right to rule in which, after the death of his father, he would become the patriarch of the family. The other was a double portion in that he would receive twice as much as any of his other brothers... In order to show that these two features were operating within Israel's history, we go to the story of Jacob and Esau, where even before they're born it is said that Esau would serve, the elder would serve the younger. And so, the right to rule would go to Jacob instead of Esau. That the double portion was allotted to the firstborn son is seen in Deuteronomy 21 where the firstborn is to be acknowledged as the firstborn, even if he's the son of the wife who is less loved... Esau lost these privileges probably when he sold his birthright to his brother for a bowl of red stuff, and he certainly lost the right to rule when his father blessed his brother instead of him, and so he's left with neither of these rights. When we fast-forward to the blessing of Jacob upon his grandsons Ephraim and Manasseh, we see that, again, Ephraim is placed above Manasseh in the blessing. But when we come to the next chapter, Genesis 49, we see that the blessing is bestowed on Joseph, and Joseph is the one who will receive the double blessing because he is the one that becomes two tribes. Judah would receive the right to rule. The firstborn was passed over because of his sin, and Simeon and Levi were passed over because of their sin, their violence, and so Judah has the right to rule, and Joseph

has the double blessing. That these two tribes would receive big allotments is suggested by the effusive blessing that Jacob renders onto his son Joseph. He's giving him a very special inheritance. He himself is going to be divided into two tribes and he receives the double blessing. That would be why Ephraim and Manasseh would be so prominent and why they would both become tribes.

Rev. Michael J. Glodo

When we read about the tribal allotments, we see that Manasseh and Ephraim are both given tribal allotments along with the other tribes of Israel when, in fact, they're not one of the twelve tribes of Israel. These are the two sons of Joseph. So, why should these two receive a full inheritance? Well, if you go back to the latter part of Genesis and the Joseph story, you see that God providentially worked through Joseph and his virtuous actions to preserve Israel, and as a result, Jacob administered, or gave a double blessing to Joseph as if Joseph were the oldest son, even though he wasn't... And the way this plays out is that Joseph's two sons receive a full inheritance each, which add up to the double blessing that Joseph was given by Jacob.

Rev. Henryk Turkanik, translation

Because the tribe of Levi did not receive a portion of the land when the lots were cast, the tribe of Joseph was divided into two tribes, so that there would again be a total of twelve tribes of Israel. Instead of the tribes of Levi and Joseph, there would now be the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, because these were the two sons of Joseph that received a specific blessing from the dying Jacob in chapter 48 of Genesis. In this way, the sons of Joseph were incorporated as the sons of Jacob.

Question 7:

What was the story of Zelophehad's daughters, and what did it teach Israel about how to apply God's law in the Promised Land?

Rev. Michael J. Glodo

The story of Zelophehad's daughters gives us a sense of how the law was apportioned, particularly with concern for the needy and the vulnerable, the poor, in the book of Joshua. Zelophehad's daughters are widowed, and therefore, without a land allotment, and without a land allotment an Israelite would be without a provision for life, for sustenance. And so, they came to Moses in a special case and they said, "When we come into the land we will be without an inheritance unless you do something." Moses sought God's will on this, and Moses ruled, if you will, in a special provision that these daughters of Zelophehad should, in spite of their widowhood, be offered an apportion so that they would not be vulnerable and not be impoverished. And this brings out an important principle about the land. The land was never relinquished by God to Israel, but the land always was retained by God as his possession, and it was for the purpose of blessing and prospering his people. So, the land was to be administered in a way in keeping with God's will, and we know that it was God's will from the laws of Deuteronomy that the poor and the weak and

the needy be provided for within Israel, such that there would — even though there would always be poor among them — that there would never be poor among them, as Deuteronomy 15 says.

Pastor Ornan Cruz, translation

The story in the book of Joshua of Zelophehad's daughters is particularly interesting. These daughters approached Joshua, saying, "Our father had no sons. Now that it's time to distribute the land inheritance, we're asking you to give us our land." This was not the first time this had happened. In Numbers 27:1-11, these same daughters of Zelophehad went before Moses and Eleazar the priest saying the same words: "When the time comes, we want to inherit the land that belonged to our father." And God answered Moses, "The daughters of Zelophehad are right. You shall . . . transfer the inheritance of their father to them." Thus, God's law was being contextualized for the circumstances in which his people were living in order for his righteousness to shine. God's law will always seek to fulfill his righteousness, to make sure it is God who gets the glory. So, God told Moses to put a clause into the law, to please add this in case history repeats itself: "If a man dies and has no son, then you shall transfer his inheritance to his daughter. And if he has no daughter, then you shall give his inheritance to his brothers. And if he has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to his father's brothers. And if his father has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to the nearest kinsman of his clan, and he shall possess it," so that the name of this Israelite will be perpetuated. . . In other words, looking at the law of God in that historical moment, which is unique to Zelophehad's daughters' request, we understand how to contextualize what God is saying without losing its essence as a divine command. We keep it applicable, but in such a way that divine justice shines over everything. It's very simple to deny a reasonable request just because we've never had it before, rather than analyzing the purpose of the law, as well as the circumstances in the moment, and then asking God for wisdom to make a final decision. For Moses this was a lesson, for Joshua this was a lesson, and for us it's also a lesson. So deep, so important that from that moment on, a new clause was added to God's law.

Question 8:

How is the theme of national unity highlighted in the book of Joshua, for instance, in stories like the construction of an altar by the Transjordan tribes?

Rev. Sherif Gendy, translation

From the beginning of the book of Joshua, the Lord asserts that all Israel be consecrated before the Lord, and all Israel be prepared for war, and all Israel be united in worshiping the Lord. That's why, for example, in chapter 22 we see that the tribes to the east of the Jordan — the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh — built for themselves an altar as a witness before the Lord. The rest of the tribes, on the west side of the Jordan, thought that these tribes had rebelled against the

Lord by building an altar other than the one in the tabernacle of Moses. What happened is that Joshua addressed this issue by sending Phinehas, the son of Eleazar the priest, and sent with him ten chiefs of Israel to evaluate the situation. The result was a reassurance of the unity of all Israel in their worship of the Lord. Consequently, the unity of Israel — all Israel together — was very important regarding conquering the land, distributing the land, and worshiping the Lord. It was a very important issue before the Lord.

Dr. Seth Tarrer

Now, while there are numerous themes that emerge from the book of Joshua, one particularly compelling theme that I see time and again in the book of Joshua is this question of corporate solidarity or national unity, this notion that Israel stands or falls together. Now, this notion of national solidarity, national unity, corporate solidarity, was adumbrated all the way back in the book of Deuteronomy prior to Joshua's leadership. In Deuteronomy 5 and Deuteronomy 11, we hear talk of this notion of "all Israel" as a formulaic phrase. Now, this phrase is going to appear over sixteen times in the book of Joshua. It's clustered heavily in the book of Joshua, this idea that there is this building of this national unity, this corporate identity. It appears in Joshua 3, 4, 7, and 24. Not only does it appear at the textual level, there are symbolic representations or actions that occur throughout the book. The building of the altar in the Jordan River as they enter into the Promised Land is an act of corporate solidarity; one from each tribe places a stone as an act of remembrance for perpetuity... When we look at Joshua 22, there's another memorial being built. This is a memorial by the Transjordan tribes of the Gadites, the Reubenites and the half tribe of Manasseh. This also stands as a physical memorial representation that binds Israel together.

Question 9:

How is the promise of Israel's land inheritance fulfilled in Christ?

Dr. James M. Hamilton

When we think about the question of how Israel's land inheritance is fulfilled in the first and second comings of the Lord Jesus, we really have to go all the way back and start with Adam. And what I have in mind here is the way that the Lord, when he made man and woman in his own image and likeness, he blessed them and said to them be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth — so they're to fill all the lands with those who bear the image and likeness of God — and then he told them to subdue the earth and to have dominion over the animal kingdom. And it's very interesting, in Joshua 18:1, when the people of Israel have come into the holy land, there's this statement at the end of Joshua 18:1 that says the land — and in Hebrew, this is *erets* — it lay subdued, and it uses the same term from Genesis 1:28 before them, so that what Adam was supposed to accomplish for all the earth, to subdue all the earth, Israel, as they come into the land, the land is subdued before them. And I think that probably Adam's responsibility in subduing the earth was to expand the borders of the Garden of Eden until all the world was like a place where God was present with

his people. And then similarly, with the people of Israel as they come into the Land of Promise, I think their responsibility is to expand the borders of the land until all the world is covered with those who live in God's place, as God's people, under God's law. And essentially, I would argue that this is what is going on in the church as well. As we seek to make disciples of all nations, what we're doing is extending the realm in which God's people are in God's place under God's teachings and instructions. And so, Jesus has opened up a way for all nations to be incorporated, and then at the second coming, the book of Revelation proclaims that he is going to definitively be the ultimate Joshua, so to speak. He is going to be the conqueror who... You know, the book of Hebrews, it says that Joshua didn't give rest to the land and Jesus is the one who will come, and he will subdue the land in a way that Adam failed to do and in a way that Joshua failed to do. So, Jesus will come as the true conqueror, as the world's true king, and he will subdue all the earth.

Rev. Sherif Gendy, translation

The promise of the land to Abraham and his offspring is fulfilled in Christ. How do we know this? There is an important verse in Galatians 3:16:

Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring," who is Christ (Galatians 3:16).

The apostle Paul tells us that Abraham's offspring, to whom the land was promised, is Christ. Christ is Abraham's offspring. Not only this, but we learn also from 2 Corinthians 1:20:

For all the promises of God find their Yes in him [in Christ]. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory (2 Corinthians 1:20).

So, the promises were given to Christ who is Abraham's offspring and were fulfilled in Christ who is also Abraham's offspring. The promises were given to Christ and fulfilled in Christ. But Paul also takes it a further step in the same chapter. Galatians 3:9 says:

Those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith (Galatians 3:9).

And then in verses 13-14 he says,

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us — for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree" —

And then verse 14 is so important,

... so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith (Galatians 3:13-14).

Paul here tells us that we, as believers in Christ, receive Abraham's blessing by faith, the promises given to Abraham. That is why Jesus for example said, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." Even Abraham himself, as we learn from Hebrews 11, was not looking forward to the land as the final fulfillment of the Lord's promises to him. That's why we learn that, "he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God." We also learn from Hebrews 11 that the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, "all died not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth." So, although the fathers and then Israel possessed the land of Canaan, they lived as strangers on earth, for they desired a better heavenly country.

Question 10:

What are some ways that the theme of national inheritance in the book of Joshua applies to Christians today?

Rev. Michael J. Glodo

The prominent feature of the land in Joshua can make the reader wonder what happens to that prominent feature when we come to the New Testament. And the simple answer is that all that the land represents in the Old Testament, which is God's inheritance to his people, is God himself in the new covenant in Christ. Ephesians 1, for instance, uses that very language, that we have been given an inheritance through our elder brother, Jesus Christ, we have been adopted as sons, and so that all is his ours by right of divine grant from God the Father. And that is then effected through the gift of the Holy Spirit, which is described by Paul as a down payment. But of course, the gift of the Spirit means the gift of God himself, so that in Christ today we have all that the land represented potentially because we have God himself as our own — him dwelling in us and we dwelling in him through Christ. Now, at Christ's second coming you see the outward manifestation of all that is ours now in the heavenly places in Christ so that the earth becomes full of the glory of God as the waters cover the sea; the kingdom of this world becomes the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ. And so, in the end, in the consummation of all things, you see a new heavens and earth where the whole earth is God's kingdom, or his reign, or his dominion physically present with his people, bringing to full expression our inheritance that is ours in God's plan in Jesus Christ.

Dr. Craig S. Keener

Throughout the Old Testament we have the promise of the land to Israel, and that raises the question, well, how does that apply to us as believers? But in Galatians 3:14 it says that the promise to Abraham is fulfilled among us in terms of the blessing of

the Spirit, which of course Paul says elsewhere is the foretaste — in Greek, the *arrabón* — the down payment, the first installment of our future inheritance. Well, what is our future inheritance? Will we participate in this promise? If you look in Revelation 21 where it describes the New Jerusalem, I mean, are we new Jerusalemites? Will not all of us who are followers of Jesus, who are spiritually children of Abraham, also participate in this inheritance? . . . Well, today, we may say, well, who gets the land? Does Israel get the land, or do we as spiritual heirs of Abraham get the land? It's going to be pretty big. I don't think we're going to have to worry about whether there's room for us or not. And I believe in light of Romans 11 that, yes, as Gentile believers we have been grafted into the heritage of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but my understanding — and I know not everybody agrees with this but — of Romans 11:26 is that there will be a turning of the Jewish people also in the end time and that those Jewish people who turn then will be grafted back in. And so, it looks to me like God has a way to wrap it all up together.

Question 11:

What was the significance of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost during the inauguration of God's kingdom?

Rev. Canon Alfred Sebahene Ph.D.

Pentecost is a very, very important event in the history of the church, and like the call of Abraham, the exodus from Egypt, the cross and resurrection — although these belong each to a particular period of history — but these are the events that shed light on some dealing on how God dealt with man throughout history. With regard to Pentecost, this is the great turning point in history. Here, with Pentecost, we have the truth that [the] Christian era is distinctly the age of the Spirit. At Pentecost, the disciples received power, and this power was meant to enable them to preach the gospel and extend the kingdom of God, and men were brought together and for the fulfillment of God's mission in the world. Its significance can be seen as that which is demonstrated in the whole plan of God. . . . So, Pentecost is the fulfillment of what was promised, the coming of the Spirit, and its significance. . . . is that which demonstrated the plan of God. So, Pentecost set the pattern or direction of the church on what was to come for the church age as a whole.

Dr. Todd M. Johnson

The significance of Pentecost in the founding of the early church is that it set the direction for the faith. And this is a continuity that Pentecost has with Old Testament passages which pointed to the fact that this gospel was going to be preached in the whole world and that it would include all of the world's peoples, even going back as far as Abraham. So, Pentecost is a way in which we find out where our faith is going to go, and it's going to go to the ends of the earth because people from all over the world come together and receive this gift of the Holy Spirit and then they go back to where they live and the gospel spreads all over the world among many different languages and people groups.

Question 12:**What does it mean that the Holy Spirit guarantees our future inheritance?****Dr. Dana M. Harris**

As believers we're caught in a tension, which is sometimes described as the "already-not yet." Part of the already is the fact that we have the Holy Spirit as a down payment. This is what Paul talks about in Ephesians 1:14. This down payment is an assurance that we will one day have our eternal inheritance. We also experience this in the reality of spiritual gifts and the spiritual bond that we feel between believers around the world. But we also know that we live in a world that is wracked by evil and is still under the effects of a world in condemnation. So, we look forward to that day when we will see Jesus face to face and when he will return and bring about the complete and total eradication of evil.

Dr. Craig S. Keener

The early Christians understood something that sometimes modern Christians have forgotten, and that is that the kingdom is not only future, but because the king who is yet to come has already come, the future has invaded history. And that's why you have passages in the New Testament, for example ... 1 Corinthians 2:9, 10 where Paul says, "Eye has not seen nor ear heard, neither has it entered the human heart what God has prepared for those who love him, but God has revealed them to us by his Spirit." Or in 2 Corinthians and in Ephesians 1, he uses a term that often appears in business documents for a down payment. He says that we have received the first installment of our future inheritance by receiving the Spirit. We have received a foretaste of the future world, because we're not just expecting a future resurrection and a future Messiah, a future king, but we're expecting a king who has already come, who has already been raised from the dead and, therefore for us, we have a foretaste, and we need to live like the people of the future age. We need to live for the future in this present age to let the world have a foretaste of what heaven is going to be like.

Dr. Danny Akin

You know, one of God's great gifts at salvation is the gift of the Holy Spirit. And the Bible speaks in so many different ways about how the Spirit ministers in our lives as Christians to ultimately bring us to conformity to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ. Ephesians 1 talks about the fact that we're sealed by the Holy Spirit, which gives us the assurance that our salvation is a permanent reality. I didn't do anything to earn it, I can't do anything to lose it, and God gave the Spirit as a down payment to ensure that my salvation will reach fruition. I am going to be like the Lord Jesus Christ because of the promise of the Holy Spirit.

Question 13:

What does it mean in Scripture to be filled with the Holy Spirit?

Dr. Craig S. Keener

When we read that Moses laid hands on Joshua, Joshua was filled with the Holy Spirit in Deuteronomy 34, he's filled with the spirit of wisdom, and that's so that he can lead God's people. We also read elsewhere in the Pentateuch that God filled someone with the holy spirit of wisdom so that they could do artwork and exquisite work on the architecture of the tabernacle. So, in Acts 6, we also read of those who are going to be leading, in terms of caring for the poor, that they are filled with the spirit of wisdom. So, we have this language used in various places. Now, elsewhere in Luke and in Acts, we read about being filled with the Spirit to prophesy. In Ephesians 5:18, in the context it says, don't be drunk with wine but instead be filled with the Spirit, and then describes what that is to look like, where you're praising God, you're thanking God for all things, and you're serving one another. So, there are a number of different expressions of the way that the Spirit fills us for a number of different things, for our particular callings, and then the kind of thing that we all need to be full of the Spirit for — to praise God and to serve one another.

Dr. Gregg R. Allison

In Ephesians 5:18 Paul commands us, "Do not be drunk with wine. That leads to debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit." What does it mean to be filled with the Spirit? It means to be commanded, to be directed, and guided, controlled by the Spirit in all aspects of our life. If we look at Paul's command, we do see that it's an imperative, it is a command, which means we can obey it or we can disobey it. Now, we certainly are to obey it, but it is a responsibility of ours to respond to this command and exercise obedience to be filled. It's also an ongoing imperative, an ongoing command. We could paraphrase it: keep on being filled, keep on being controlled or guided by the Holy Spirit, moment by moment. So, it's a command that draws our attention to obedience, being controlled by the Spirit moment by moment. It's also a passive command. It's not an active, "throw the ball!" command. Rather, it's a passive command — *be* filled. And the step of obedience that is required is that we put ourself in a position of yielded-ness; we adopt a posture of yielding to the Spirit's control and guidance in our life. So, what does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit? It means to be consciously obedient, submitting to, yielding to the Spirit's direction and control, guidance in our life, moment by moment.

Question 14:

What will the new heavens and new earth be like?

Dr. Craig S. Keener

It's really hard for us to try to describe the new heavens and the new earth because there are a number of biblical passages that present it in different ways. And I think one reason for that is you have to describe it poetically, you have to describe it

artistically, because it's on a greater level than anything that we can normally understand. I think that's why 1 Corinthians 2:9, 10 tells us this: "eye has not seen, neither has ear heard, neither has it entered the human heart, the things that God has prepared for those who love him, but God has revealed them to us by his Spirit." We have the foretaste, not so much in words, but the foretaste of God's presence that reminds us what a great future God has in store for us. And so, all these images that we have in the Prophets and in the book of Revelation are just a foretaste of the glory that awaits.

Dr. Vern S. Poythress

What will the new heavens and new earth be like? Well, in one sense we don't know because it's up to God, and God has surprises. He gives us a detailed description of the new heaven and new earth in Revelation 21 through the first part of 22, but that's a visionary description. It's symbolical. For instance, the city is in the shape of a perfect cube, which is the shape of the Holy of Holies in the temple in the Old Testament. So, that's symbolical of the holiness of that new order. We also know that it will be a transfiguration of this present order just as Christ's resurrection body is a transfiguration of his pre-resurrection body, and that's the pattern for our resurrection but also for the entire cosmos. So, we know there'll be some continuity, but it's up to God exactly what he's going to do. The point is to trust God rather than to calculate the details.

Rev. Vermon Pierre

What will the new heavens and the new earth be like? We don't have every detail about it, but the Bible tells us a whole lot. In Revelation 21, 22 particularly, it speaks of heaven coming down and becoming part of earth. And one of the things I'd like to emphasize there, it's not as if the earth goes away. It's a new heavenly world, if we can put it that way. And this new heavenly world is a place where God is always present. It's a place where the Bible says there's no more tears, there's no more pain, there's no more suffering, and most especially there's no more sin. In many ways, it's humanity in the way that it should have been, in the way that it never has been since Adam sinned and humanity has continued to sin and reject God. All that is wiped away and human beings are able to honor God and follow God and worship God in the ways that they should. It's going to be a place characterized by love and by beauty and by joy in the most perfect and pure form, because we will be in the presence of love and joy and beauty, in the presence of God forever. So, the new heavens and the new earth will be an incredibly special place. It's a place for us to look forward to, to motivate us to live in the earth now, knowing that this earth and the heavens, there's better to come.

Dr. Greg Perry

We get a vision of what the new heavens and the new earth will be like in Zechariah 8. The prophet is talking about the most important characteristic of this new city is that God, once again, will dwell with his people, and that that's going to make all the difference in every sphere of life. And so, the prophet begins to talk about how the old women and the old men will once again sit in the streets. And there's such a sense

of public safety. The kids, the boys and the girls are running and playing in the streets, and there's a reconciliation between the generations, the old and the young, they want to be together. And the prophet talks about how in the former times you didn't have any wages, and your beasts didn't have any food, but in this time when God returns, you will have what you need. There'll be economic renewal as well. And your work is going to be productive, you're going to produce surpluses, and you're going to have, to be able to share with one another. And then he talks about how there will be also ecological renewal, that once again the grains will grow and the earth will have rain and will have dew that you need, and the vineyards will produce wine. And so, what we see in terms of the new heavens and the new earth is that every area of image bearing will flourish once again as God comes to dwell with his people and he completely renews our role as his image bearers in the world.

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