

# Receiving Your Inheritance

## Messages from the Book of Joshua

Message 10

### *Giants in the Land*

Joshua 12:1-22:34

Read Joshua 13:1-6; 14:6-15; 15:13-19; 17:3-4

#### ***Introduction***

Israel was home. It took over 400 years, but finally she had a place of her own. This is what God had promised Abraham when He told Abraham to leave his home in Mesopotamia. In Genesis 12 we read,

*Now the LORD had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, From your family And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."*

*Genesis 12:1-3*

Abraham did his part. He left everything: his house, his land, his friends – all that was familiar to him except his family. He journeyed to Canaan, living in tents along the way. But when he arrived, Canaan was occupied by the Canaanites! God promised that 400 years later Abraham's descendants would occupy this land, and Abraham believed God. He lived in tents all his life. He never had a proper home. But God's promise was good enough for him.

Now the time of waiting is over. Israel has spent ten years fighting the Canaanites, and all the Canaanite kings have been defeated. Last week's passage concluded, "Then the land had rest from war." There are still a lot of Canaanites in the land the countryside is full of them. It will take many years to clean out all the towns and villages, but the power of the Canaanites is broken. Never again will they be able to launch a full-scale attack against the whole nation of Israel. So now it is time to settle down. It's time to go home and rest.

#### ***Dividing the Land***

Chapters 12 to 22 principally relate the division of the land among the tribes of Israel and the settling down in their inheritance. This section begins appropriately enough with a list of all the kings Israel defeated. There were the two that Moses defeated on the east side of the Jordan river, and the 31 that Joshua defeated on the west side. Chapter 13 begins the long account of dividing the among the 12 tribes. Let's read chapter 13, verses 1 to 6.

Joshua's fighting days are over. He is old, too old to carry the war forward. There still is much to be done, but with the kings dead and their armies destroyed, it is no longer necessary to wage war on a massive scale. From now on each tribe will be responsible for rooting out the remaining Canaanites in its own territory. But in order for this to happen the territories must be assigned. So God reminds Joshua of the national boundaries and orders him, as his last major act, to divide it among the tribes.

What is there to be gained by a study of the succeeding chapters? Why do we care which land went to which tribes? Well remember, this book was not written to you. It was written to the immediate descendants of the settlers. This mattered very much to them. For them this was a testimony of God's magnificent goodness in giving each tribe its own allotment in the lush land they had conquered. Perhaps as a historical record it prevented them from arguing over their boundaries! For them all these weird-sounding rivers,

mountains, and valleys were familiar territory. They were grateful that God cared enough about them to supervise the division of the land. And for us, we read this with reverence, knowing that God still cares for you the same way. God has chosen a vocation just for you, a husband or wife (in most cases) perfectly suited for you, a house you will enjoy. God cares for you down to the last detail, just as He did the Israelites.

There is another lesson in this long account. It is the importance of obedience. Page after page testify that Israel, and Joshua in particular, did *exactly* as God commanded. No tribe was overlooked. No area was neglected. The whole land was portioned out just as God had commanded. Even the small details were remembered. Caleb's claim, the daughters of Zelophehad, the special case of Simeon, the cities of refuge, the cities for the Levites – all was carried out to the letter. And what was the result? Turn to chapter 21, verse 43.

*So the LORD gave to Israel all the land of which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they took possession of it and dwelt in it. The LORD gave them rest all around, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers. And not a man of all their enemies stood against them; the LORD delivered all their enemies into their hand. Not a word failed of any good thing which the LORD had spoken to the house of Israel. All came to pass. Joshua 21:43-45*

Ever promise – fulfilled. “Not a word failed of any good thing which the LORD had spoken to the house of Israel. All came to pass.” Joshua obeyed everything God commanded, and God granted all the promises. The result was that they had rest. The war was over. They had sturdy houses, as God promised. They had fertile gardens and farms, as God promised. They had fine, strong cities, as God promised. It was time to put down their weapons and go home. At last they had rest!

Do you long for rest? Are you fervently wishing for a husband or wife? Are you anxiously hoping for a rewarding job? I cannot promise all these to you now. Sometimes God takes us through periods of struggle. But the testimony of scripture is clear as crystal and as reliable as gold. God cares for His people, and He specially looks out for those who are especially faithful to Him. Those who go through life restless, anxious, and disappointed are the ones who refuse to obey. They are fearful or lazy or apathetic, and they never have peace. If you want a good life, if you want rest – do like Joshua. Get off your duff, and get out there and obey God. Obedience, like Joshua's battles, is hard. It's just that the alternative is worse. Proverbs 13:15 says, “The way of the wicked is hard.” Don't make your life miserable by seeking the easy way out. Jesus said, “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” (Matt. 6:33) Listen to Him.

### ***Giants in the Land***

For the rest of our time this evening we will take the *Princess Bride* approach to this passage – we will spend our time on the good parts! One of the best stories buried in here is that of Caleb. Let's read 14:6-15; 15:13-19.

Isn't this a wonderful story? Here comes Caleb to ask for the land he has been promised. Did you catch how old he is? He was forty when he went on the spying expedition and now it is fifty years later. This is a tough character. Ninety years old, and still kicking. All his friends except Joshua are dead. For forty years he wandered through the desert with them, paying the penalty for their sin, remembering that Moses promised him the hill country of Judah. For ten years he fought so the other tribes would have a place to live. Now it was a special pleasure, a poignant triumph for Caleb to step forward and claim his prize.

But let's look at his prize. It's not a particularly attractive place. Canaan had plains and fertile

ground, but Caleb chose the hills. Furthermore, the Anakim were there. Remember them? They are the giants. These guys were monsters. Goliath was one of the race of giants, and scripture tells us he was six cubits and a span tall. A cubit is a foot and a half, so he was about nine and a half feet high! That's a foot and a half higher than the ceiling in most houses. These guys were human tanks. Later in Israel's history when Goliath came out against them, he singlehandedly terrorized the whole Israelite army. Remember – of course you do, its right here in this passage – it was the giants which scared off the Israelites in the first place, forty years ago. So what would you do? You were faithful. Everybody else wimped out, but you stood firm. In the face of overwhelming fear, you argued for going in to fight the giants. And now you alone, with Joshua, have lived to see the day when Israel entered Canaan. And your reward is that you get your pick of the land. So what do you choose? The nice, easy, safe parts? No! If you are Caleb you chose the hardest, most dangerous part.

Caleb reminds me of the missionary described in J. Oswald Sanders' book *Spiritual Leadership*. When asked what placement he wanted he replied, "I know not what to ask, but I simply desire the hardest place you have." Such men *truly* are giants. Caleb could have decided that he had done his part. He was 90 years old. He fought all his life. Now it was time for younger men to take over. He deserved a good piece of land as his reward. And that would have been just. But that is not the sort of man Caleb is. Caleb is a giant-killer, and he will go to his grave fighting for the Lord. Caleb is a superb example of godly ambition. Another missionary, Hudson Taylor, missionary to China, was fond of saying, "Seek great things for God, ask great things for God, attempt great things for God." These are the national heroes of the church – men who were larger than life, men who refused small tasks and charged into the hardest part of any job, men who destroyed idols, defied kings, and built the church. Such men go out looking for giants, and will not rest until they do some great work for God.

Did you notice Caleb's appeal to Joshua? Simple, no boasting, just plain trust in God. "Now therefore, give me this mountain of which the LORD spoke in that day." He asks only for what God promised, nothing more or less. Then he said, "It may be that the LORD will be with me, and I shall be able to drive them out as the LORD said." Well, what if the LORD doesn't enable him to drive out the giants? Who knows? Who cares? Maybe he will die. But then he will be with his God, and how else should he go, but in service to his King? Here is a man full of confidence, with enough faith for a whole nation, yet as humble as a servant boy. What a display of godly character!

There is no account of the battle. Verse 14 simply says, "Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite to this day, because he wholly followed the LORD God of Israel." Caleb won, because he followed God with all his heart. Those giants never had a chance!

Chapter 15 continues Caleb's story into the next generation. Like a true leader, he destroyed the giant stronghold himself. But Caleb is not selfish. Why should he have all the fun? Besides, he has a daughter to give to some deserving young man. But how shall he find a man worthy of his daughter? So Caleb offered to let one of the young men take Kirjath Sepher, and promised his daughter as the prize for the victor. You see what a wise plan this was? This way Caleb could assure that his son-in-law was worthy of his daughter. Apparently she was a real prize, and only the best would do for her. Caleb's nephew Othniel accepted the challenge and took the city. Then we see the true character of this magnificent couple. They boldly ask their father for some property, and choose land with springs – a vital necessity in a dry climate. This is not a selfish request, but a wise one – for people who are determined to serve God with all their hearts. The future of Israel looks bright if Othniel and Achsah are any indication. A nation of families like these will be invincible.

***Giants Today***

It is customary for preachers and teachers to take a passage like this and apply it to the congregation by finding giants among us today. You know, huge, overwhelming foes, be they people, or ideologies, or war or poverty, etc. And this is fine. But tonight we should ask instead, who are the giant-killers among us? Where today are those who are energized by the thought of fighting God's battles? Who are those who are on fire for the Lord?

Last week we talked about some of the challenges facing God's people in our generation. I believe the foremost spiritual challenge of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was atheistic communism, and many of our fathers and grandfathers devoted their lives to ridding the planet of that plague. And they won! Communism still lurks here and there, but it is no longer a dangerous world-wide threat. I think the primary threat to the church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is Islam. Notice I did not say the threat is Muslims. The people of North Africa, the Middle East, and south Asia may perhaps fight against our armed forces in certain cases, but they are not our true enemy. The true enemy is the religion, not the people. It is a religion of death, a hateful, perverse religion. It enslaves women and impoverishes whole cultures. Islam is on the move, and intends to destroy all other cultures. Now as Christians our first concern is not to preserve Western culture. God knows it is wicked enough, it deserves to be destroyed. No, the point is that Islam, by its very nature, extinguishes all other religions in its bounds. This is not a world-wide culture war. It is a universal spiritual struggle.

Islam will perish. Jesus said, "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." I believe the power of Islam will be broken in this century. The question is, who will go forth to do the work? Who are the Calebs among us? Who is asking, "Lord, show me the most dangerous, the most difficult field of service?" Where are the brave men who will go into Afghanistan and Pakistan and Saudi Arabia – places from which they may never return – to serve their God there? Where are the brave women who will love such men enough to follow them? Where are those who despise small prayers, but demand that whole countries submit before Almighty God? Islam will perish, but where are the giant-killers whom God will send to defeat it?

I hope we here tonight join that great host who will fight Islam all the way to our graves. But in the meantime, we have our own battles close at hand. Last week I suggested that Christians at Lehigh are trapped in the pursuit of jobs and pleasure. There are exceptions, but on the whole, spiritual life at Lehigh is not very strong. We are making efforts to proclaim God's word with clarity and power. We have begun to try to start to pray, sort of. A few people have started showing up at noon prayer meetings. The Ministry Team is praying more. But ask yourself, when you wake up, is the first thought that crosses your mind a prayer for God to be glorified at Lehigh. Is God's glory your primary goal here? The Westminster Shorter Catechism opens by asking, "What is the chief end of man?" And it answers, "To glorify God and enjoy Him forever." Is this the goal that controls your decision-making here? Are your summer plans geared to glorifying God? Are you seeking to save lost people here? Really? How high is this on your priority list? Now let's not forget your courses. Do you work hard to please God in your assignments? And here is the real test. Do you plan your Saturday activities to serve God? Or are you caught in the trap of pleasing yourself? If that is your goal, you know, you will never be satisfied. You will always hunger for more time to sleep, to watch TV, to listen to Christian music, to hang out with your friends – all good things, but dissatisfying when you seek fulfillment in them.

Where are those whose hearts break for the miserable condition of this campus? People who pray day and night for God to move with great power? People who approach each day looking for some hard task to do for God, so they can see His power revealed in their weakness? Where are such people? Years ago I worked at a small college. It had an enrollment of about 1200. One year a freshman showed up who clearly had some training in ministry. He came to campus looking to make a difference – and he did. The fellowship at that time was small and weak – about 15 people. That year he told me that his goal was to build it to

50 by the time he left. Four years later there were 35 people involved – almost everyone brought in by Steve. But the whole character of the group was changed. It was a dynamic, healthy ministry. God took a student of average ability and used him in an amazing way – because he dared to trust God for a big goal.

How about you? Are you ready to become a giant-killer? Are you ready to stop playing around and give yourself totally to God. The scripture said Caleb *wholly* followed the LORD God of Israel. Will you?

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