

MARCH 13,

Joshua 13

Joshua 14, 15 and 16

Joshua 17

In chapter 11 Joshua wins all the battles and the land has rest from war, but in chapter 13 there is still a good bit of work to be done by the individual tribes to whom different areas or regions have been given. What are we to make of that? I do not believe that there is any contradiction here. The major campaigns, that would require the army of all of the tribes of Israel together, are concluded. There is no significant opposition left in the land. Every large or medium-sized city-state has been dealt with. No one is left to attack Israel. Nevertheless, scattered throughout nearly every section of the country, there still remain pockets of Canaanite civilization, which have not taken the field against Israel, and have not yet been subdued by the people of God. It will remain for the individual tribes to "finish the task" in the areas that are given over to them as their inheritance. In effect, Joshua won the war, but there was still a mopping-up operation to be done.

There is a strong parallel here to the spiritual reality with which we find ourselves dealing right now. Jesus won the war against Satan. On the cross at Calvary, the decisive blow was struck, and at the empty tomb on Easter morning, the victory was proclaimed. Nevertheless, you and I are still required to deal with some angry and ongoing hostilities as we complete the "mopping up" operation, by securing for Christ all the territory that remains as yet unliberated. The task assigned to each tribe was, sadly, never fully completed - that created immense problems for the next generation of Israelites. It is my prayer that we will be stronger and more faithful than they were. A good meditation question for the day would be to determine what unsubdued areas remain in our own lives, and then to covenant with God, by His grace, to address each one of the unsubdued areas.

The next 40 years were not easy ones for Caleb. Joshua, because of his constant connection and presence with Moses, would have been at least partially insulated from the murmuring and complaining of a nation full of malcontents. That would not necessarily be true of Caleb. He wasn't with Moses all the time. He wasn't the heir apparent to the role of leader of Israel. He had to spend his time with that rebellious group of men and women who were all destined to die in the wilderness, whose unbelief had placed a 40-year delay upon the fulfillment of the promise, and who were never quite able to forget that Caleb was the only one of all of them, except Joshua himself, who would be permitted to enter the Promised Land. They would surely have been jealous of him. Maybe they even hated him, (righteous men often find themselves hated without cause,) and there would certainly be a great temptation for Caleb to be frustrated with that generation of unbelievers, who had cost him 40 years of productive life in the Promised Land.

There were two secrets to the remarkable life of Caleb - faith and obedience. These are the keys, and now some 3,400 years later, those same two keys will release the very power of God in our lives. There are some verses in the 5th chapter of I John that

I believe sum up the life and example of Caleb in a phenomenal way. They say, *"This is love for God: to obey His commands. And His commands are not burdensome for everyone born of God has overcome the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world even our faith"* (1 John 5:3-4). Has there ever been a better example of one who overcame the world by faith and obedience than the man Caleb, the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite, who chose to wholly follow the Lord God of Israel?

The first thing that I want for you to notice is that even before all of the tribes had received their inheritance, (seven were still waiting), the whole nation gathered at Shiloh and set up the Tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting, there. I hope that you will lay hold of a map somewhere (there is sure to be one in the back of a good study Bible,) look at the different sections of the land, and locate the city of Shiloh. You will immediately notice that Shiloh is in the center of the Promised Land, so that just as Israel had encamped for 40 years with the Ark of God in the middle of the camp, so she would settle with the Ark of God in the exact same position, right in the middle. The Lord "in the midst" is always to be the pattern for the people of God. Shiloh, then, was a very important place to Israel, because it was the place where the ark was. It would remain there until the time of Samuel, when superstitiously and foolishly, the people of Israel carried the ark with them into battle, believing that, like some kind of charm, it would guarantee victory against the Philistines. It didn't, and it was captured by the Philistines, as Israel went down to a crushing defeat. The Philistines carried it off, but soon sent it back to Israel because of the damage and destruction that having the ark caused in the Temple of Dagon in their country. The Ark got as far as Kiriath Jearim, where it was kept for the next 20 years, before David finally had the ark brought to Jerusalem, his newly captured capital. But all of that is in the future. Joshua established the ark in Shiloh and there it stayed for a very long time.

The tribe of Joseph had a little ego problem. They were the descendants of Joseph - Joshua was one of their tribesmen. (He was from Ephraim.) They had important associations and they were proud of them. Their complaint was that Joshua hadn't given them enough land. But that wasn't the real problem, as Joshua is quick to point out. Joshua's response to them was basically this - 'why should I ask God to give you more land - you haven't done anything about possessing all of what He's already given you.' They had plenty of space if they would just deal with the obstacles - the forests on the one hand (clearing them would be too hard) - and the Canaanite iron chariots on the other (clearing them would be too risky). The enemy was so deeply entrenched in their land and they would not move to dislodge them. In commenting on this passage in his book entitled, Victorious Christian Living, Alan Redpath says, "How often is this situation with which the children of Joseph were faced repeated today! The children of Joseph were not satisfied with their lot. There was not enough scope for their gifts they thought; they wanted a larger sphere of service. Yet the fact of the matter was that in the sphere that God had given them, the enemy was still deeply entrenched. Your complaint (he continues) may be the same - that you do not have enough scope for your own abilities. Are you constantly discontented with your present lot...it may be that the searchlight of God's Word will disclose that the enemy is still deeply entrenched in your soul" (p. 207) There is a lot of merit in that application. Often enough we want more 'territory' than God has seen fit to give us -

but the real problem is that we haven't moved to fully possess what He has already given us.