



Israel Receives a Land

Lesson Focus

God fulfilled his promises to Abraham to make his descendants into a great nation and to give them the land of Canaan. Joshua led the Israelites in key victories to conquer the land and gave each tribe its inheritance to possess. Caleb and Joshua remained faithful to God, and God gave them a special inheritance.

Key Passages

Joshua 11:1–23, 14:6–15, 18:8–10, 21:43–45, selected passages

What You Will Learn

- How God fulfilled his promise to give Abraham's descendants a land.
- How the tribes received their inheritance.

Memory Verse

Joshua 1:9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.

Prepare to Learn

Scriptural Background

After the amazing victories God gave Joshua at Jericho and at Gibeon, another group of kings, this time from the north, came together against Israel. The army they gathered was a huge horde complete with horses and chariots (Joshua 11:1–5). But God assured Joshua of the victory (Joshua 11:6), and Joshua attacked. The defeat of this army opened the door for the conquest of the north, but it took about seven years for Israel to capture the major cities (Joshua 11:18–19). Although pockets of Canaanites remained in the land, the major battles were won, and the kings were defeated. Joshua divided up the land by lot to the tribes of Israel (Joshua 11:23). Nine and a half tribes received land west of the Jordan River, while the tribes of Reuben and Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh had received land from Moses east of the Jordan (Joshua 13:7–8). The only tribe that did not receive an inheritance of land was the Levites. But they received cities and pastureland throughout the country (Joshua 21:1–3). They also received the Lord’s offerings from the people as their inheritance (Joshua 13:14).

Joshua released the fighting men of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. They had fought faithfully beside the other tribes and were given permission to return home (Joshua 22:1–6). A brief misunderstanding regarding an altar they built led to

the other tribes marching against them and accusing them of rebellion against the Lord (Joshua 22:10–20). But when the eastern tribes explained the purpose of their altar to be a reminder that they, too, followed the Lord, the conflict was resolved and everyone returned to their homes (Joshua 22:21–34). This incident shows that the Israelites took the command of God seriously to destroy any brother or tribe who rebelled or turned to idolatry.

Joshua and Caleb were the oldest surviving Israelite men because God rewarded their faithfulness to him when they spied out the land 45 years previously. And the years did not diminish their heart for the Lord. At age 85, Caleb came to Joshua and asked to take on the hill country belonging to the giant descendants of Anak (Joshua 14:10–12). This land had fortified cities that the other Israelites feared—but not Caleb! Just as he had said 45 years earlier, Caleb believed God would give the victory. Caleb and his relatives fought the giants, and sure enough, God granted them victory. The land of Hebron belonged to Caleb as his inheritance and as a testament of his faith (Joshua 14:13–15). The Israelites gave the city of Timnathserah to Joshua within the land of his tribe, Ephraim. God saw that his faithful servants received a special inheritance for their service.

Before his death, Joshua called the Israelites to him and charged them to remain faithful (Joshua 23:1–13). He wanted them to remember all the great miracles God had done for them. He knew the punishment that would occur if they turned from God and disobeyed his commands. Joshua challenged Israel to put away false gods and choose to follow the Lord. He confirmed that he and his house would serve the Lord (Joshua 24:14–15). The Israelites promised to serve the Lord as well (Joshua 24:21),

and they did during the days of the generation that saw God’s miracles (Joshua 24:31).

The book of Joshua gives the fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham to make him a nation of people and to give them all the land of Canaan (Genesis 17:3–8). One remaining promise would be fulfilled about 1,500 years later when Jesus would come to earth. Jesus was the fulfillment of the promised Savior who would bless all families of the earth (Genesis 12:3).

Historical/Apologetics Background

A key verse in the book of Joshua is Joshua 11:23: “So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the LORD had spoken to Moses. And Joshua gave it for an inheritance to Israel according to their tribal allotments. And the land had rest from war.” This verse summarizes the main conquest of the southern and northern kings and their cities, but it may, at first glance, seem to contradict God’s words in Joshua 13:1 where he tells Joshua there is still land to possess. The major battles appear to be completed in the seven years of fighting described in chapter 11 (see Joshua 11:18); however, there remained land that wasn’t yet occupied by the Israelites. In these areas untouched by the general occupation, the Israelites held the responsibility to drive out the inhabitants. God promised to drive out these people if the Israelites were obedient to him (Deuteronomy 11:22–23). God commanded that the Israelites completely destroy

the Canaanites and Amorites. God’s people were his instrument of judgment on the wicked people living in the land of Canaan. The people in Canaan had rejected the Lord and were worshipping false gods and even sacrificing their children to idols.

God told Abraham that his descendants would return to the land of Canaan when the sin of the Amorites (another term for Canaanites) was complete (Genesis 15:16). The Amorites had years to repent and turn to God, but they did not. God’s punishment was just. However, as the book of Judges records, the Israelites were not obedient to drive out all the Canaanites (Judges 1:27–36). These people became a snare to them, leading them into idolatry many times. God told the Israelites he would no longer give them victory over the remaining people in the land. They would test the Israelites’ devotion to the Lord (Judges 2:2–3). God’s promise to give victory was removed due to their disobedience

and delay to act on his promise. May we avoid this trap of inaction and complacency and instead obey the Lord immediately. The consequences of disobedience lead to a cycle of sin, repentance, and the need for God's deliverance—a cycle we see repeated in the book of Judges.

Studying God's Word

Were all of the promises to Abraham fulfilled?

Take notes as you study the following passages.

Continuing the Conquest

Joshua 11:1–23

Joshua 14:6–15

Take notes as you study the following passage.

Dividing the Inheritance

Joshua 13–21

Application

1. As the Israelites took over the promised land, there were still remnants of the pagan cultures that were not wiped out, contrary to God's command. What do you think the consequence of this will be for the Israelites in the future?
2. Have you ever had doubts or questions about how God controls things like the casting of a lot? How can we seek to understand these claims that are so clearly presented in Scripture?
3. Who do you know who is like Joshua or Caleb, faithful examples of trusting in God and obeying him? How does that encourage you? How could you encourage them?
4. How does the detail in the description of the division of the land relate to the reliability of the Bible?

5. Our memory verse for this section, Joshua 1:9, is a direct command to Joshua from God—to be strong and courageous, knowing that God would not leave him. How do we apply this verse to our own lives as Christians living thousands of years later?

Prayer Requests
