

Boundaries for the Remaining Tribes of Israel

Joshua 19

Introduction: It's hard to find the territory of Simeon on Bible maps, because the tribe of Simeon was given only cities within the tribal territory of Judah. Verses 10-16 give the boundaries for the territory of Zebulun. The "Bethlehem" of verse 15 is not the "Bethlehem of Judah," where our Lord was born, but the territory of Zebulun included Nazareth, where our Lord grew up as a boy. Verses 17-23 trace the boundaries for the tribe of Issachar. Issachar's territory included part of the plain of Jezreel, where the armies will gather for the final battle of Armageddon, according to Revelation 16. The boundaries for the tribe of Asher are given in verses 24-31. Asher's territory included Mount Carmel, where Elijah would defeat the prophets of Baal years later. The godly prophetess, Anna, was from the tribe of Asher (Luke 2). The boundaries for the tribe of Naphtali are given in verses 32-39. Naphtali included the west side of the Sea of Galilee, where so much of our Lord's earthly ministry took place. This was certainly predicted in Isaiah 9.

Verses 40-48 describe the territory that was given to the tribe of Dan. Let's read verse 47: "*And the border of the children of Dan went beyond these, because the children of Dan went up to fight against Leshem and took it; and they struck it with the edge of the sword, took possession of it, and dwelt in it. They called Leshem, Dan, after the name of Dan their father.*" The details of how part of the tribe of Dan migrated to the far north are given in Judges 18. This explains why the length of the land of Israel is often said to be "from Dan to Beersheba."

Finally, Joshua's portion of the land is given in verses 49-51.

Joshua 19:1-51 - *"The second lot came out for Simeon, for the tribe of the children of Simeon according to their families. And their inheritance was within the inheritance of the children of Judah.² They had in their inheritance Beersheba (Sheba), Moladah,³ Hazar Shual, Balah, Ezem,⁴ Eltolad, Bethul, Hormah,⁵ Ziklag, Beth Marcaboth, Hazar Susah,⁶ Beth Lebaoth, and Sharuhem: thirteen cities and their villages;⁷ Ain, Rimmon, Ether, and Ashan: four cities and their villages;⁸ and all the villages that were all around these cities as far as Baalath Beer, Ramah of the South. This was the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Simeon according to their families."*

⁹ *The inheritance of the children of Simeon was included in the share of the children of Judah, for the share of the children of Judah was too much for them. Therefore the children of Simeon had their inheritance within the inheritance of that people.*

The Land of Zebulun

¹⁰ *The third lot came out for the children of Zebulun according to their families, and the border of their inheritance was as far as Sarid.¹¹ Their border went toward the west and to Maralah, went to Dabbasheth, and extended along the brook that is east of Jokneam.¹² Then from Sarid it went eastward toward the sunrise along the border of Chisloth Tabor, and went out toward Daberath, bypassing Japhia.¹³ And from there it passed along on the east of Gath Hepher, toward Eth Kazin, and extended to Rimmon, which borders on Neah.¹⁴ Then the border went around it on the north side of Hannathon, and it ended in the Valley of Jiphthah El.¹⁵ Included were Kattath, Nahallal, Shimron, Idalah, and Bethlehem: twelve cities with their villages.¹⁶ This was the inheritance of the children of Zebulun according to their families, these cities with their villages.*

The Land of Issachar

¹⁷ *The fourth lot came out to Issachar, for the children of Issachar according to their families.¹⁸ And their territory went to Jezreel, and included Chesulloth, Shunem,¹⁹ Haphraim, Shion, Anaharath,²⁰ Rabbith, Kishion, Abez,²¹ Remeth, En*

*Gannim, En Haddah, and Beth Pazzez.*²² And the border reached to Tabor, Shahazimah, and Beth Shemesh; their border ended at the Jordan: sixteen cities with their villages.²³ This was the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Issachar according to their families, the cities and their villages.

The Land of Asher

²⁴ The fifth lot came out for the tribe of the children of Asher according to their families.²⁵ And their territory included Helkath, Hali, Beten, Achshaph,²⁶ Alammelech, Amad, and Mishal; it reached to Mount Carmel westward, along the Brook Shihor Libnath.²⁷ It turned toward the sunrise to Beth Dagon; and it reached to Zebulun and to the Valley of Jiphthah El, then northward beyond Beth Emek and Neiel, bypassing Cabul which was on the left,²⁸ including Ebron, Rehob, Hammon, and Kanah, as far as Greater Sidon.²⁹ And the border turned to Ramah and to the fortified city of Tyre; then the border turned to Hosah, and ended at the sea by the region of Achzib.³⁰ Also Ummah, Aphek, and Rehob were included: twenty-two cities with their villages.³¹ This was the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Asher according to their families, these cities with their villages.

The Land of Naphtali

³² The sixth lot came out to the children of Naphtali, for the children of Naphtali according to their families.³³ And their border began at Heleph, enclosing the territory from the terebinth tree in Zaanannim, Adami Nekeb, and Jabneel, as far as Lakkum; it ended at the Jordan.³⁴ From Heleph the border extended westward to Aznoth Tabor, and went out from there toward Hukkok; it adjoined Zebulun on the south side and Asher on the west side, and ended at Judah by the Jordan toward the sunrise.³⁵ And the fortified cities are Ziddim, Zer, Hammath, Rakkath, Chinnereth,³⁶ Adamah, Ramah, Hazor,³⁷ Kedesh, Edrei, En Hazor,³⁸ Iron, Migdal El, Horem, Beth Anath, and Beth Shemesh: nineteen cities with their villages.³⁹ This was the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Naphtali according to their families, the cities and their villages.

The Land of Dan

⁴⁰ The seventh lot came out for the tribe of the children of Dan according to their families.⁴¹ And the territory of their inheritance was Zorah, Eshtaol, Ir Shemesh,⁴² Shaalabbin, Aijalon, Jethlah,⁴³ Elon, Timnah, Ekron,⁴⁴ Eltekeh, Gibbethon, Baalath,⁴⁵ Jehud, Bene Berak, Gath Rimmon,⁴⁶ Me Jarkon, and Rakkon, with the region near Joppa.⁴⁷ And the border of the children of Dan went beyond these, because the children of Dan went up to fight against Leshem and took it; and they struck it with the edge of the sword, took possession of it, and dwelt in it. They called Leshem, Dan, after the name of Dan their father.⁴⁸ This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Dan according to their families, these cities with their villages.

Joshua's Inheritance

⁴⁹ When they had made an end of dividing the land as an inheritance according to their borders, the children of Israel gave an inheritance among them to Joshua the son of Nun.⁵⁰ According to the word of the LORD they gave him the city which he asked for, Timnath Serah in the mountains of Ephraim; and he built the city and dwelt in it.

⁵¹ These were the inheritances which Eleazar the priest, Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel divided as an inheritance by lot in Shiloh before the LORD, at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. So they made an end of dividing the country."

Background Notes

Deuteronomy 6:10-11 says, "So it shall be, when the LORD your God brings you into the land of which He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give you large and beautiful cities which you did not build, houses full of all good things, which you did not fill, hewn-out wells which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant...."

We see the fulfillment of that prophecy in Joshua 19. The Israelites did not destroy the towns and villages -- they took them over and lived in them. God gave these cities to Israel as gifts. Only three cities were destroyed and burned in the conquest: Jericho, Ai, and Hazor.

Doctrinal / Teaching Points

1. Every believer has a portion in the land.

The physical land that God gave His people Israel represents the spiritual land that God has given us. The spiritual land is the “realm of spiritual realities.” This is where we find our spiritual blessings. This is also where we fight our spiritual battles, as we see in the book of Ephesians. Our spiritual gifts and function in the body of Christ are also part of that spiritual land.

Every believer has a portion in the land. This lesson is written all over the book of Joshua. Just as God sovereignly divided the land portions among the different tribes in the book of Joshua, so God sovereignly distributes the different spiritual gifts and ministries among His people today – right down to **every** individual believer.

1 Corinthians 12:4-7 says, *“There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all...”* Notice the emphasis on the word “all.” Every believer is included! Verse 11: *“But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.”* Again, the emphasis is on each one! Every believer has a portion in the land.

In reference to spiritual gifts, 1 Peter 4:10 says, *“As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”* Notice, once again, that each one has received a gift. Every believer has a portion in the land!

Notice the emphasis is on families in Joshua 19. Verse 16: *“This was the inheritance of the children of Zebulun according to their families, these cities with their villages.”* Verse 23: *“This was the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Issachar according to their families, the cities and their villages.”* Verse 31: *“This was the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Asher according to their families, these cities with their villages.”* Verse 39: *“This was the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Naphtali according to their families, the cities and their villages.”* Verse 48: *“This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Dan according to their families, these cities with their villages.”*

The land was not just divided up by tribes -- it was divided up and distributed to individual families. The individual families didn't fight for it, or vote for it, or just grab what they wanted. No, our sovereign God Himself gave it them. Do you see the spiritual picture, and the lesson for us about the spiritual land that God has given us? God sovereignly divides and distributes His spiritual gifts and ministries and activities to individual believers. Every believer has a portion in the land.

2. “The Lord's portion is His people.”

Our doctrinal point is a quote from Deuteronomy 32:9 – *“For the Lord's portion is His people....”* That truth is taught here in Joshua 19. In verses 49-50 Joshua was given an inheritance in the land -- “Timnath Serah,” meaning “an abundant portion.”

Throughout the book of Joshua, Joshua himself is a picture or type of the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, in Hebrew the name *Joshua* is the same as the name *Jesus* in Greek. As Moses is a picture or type of Christ redeeming His people out of the world of sin and slavery, so Joshua is a picture of the resurrected Christ leading His people into the land of spiritual blessings.

In Ephesians 1, we have a list of all of our spiritual blessings in Christ, in the spiritual land that God has given us. This spiritual land is called “the heavenlies.” It’s the realm of spiritual realities – unseen, but real. Now notice Ephesians 1:18 - “*that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints...*” Note -- His inheritance in the saints! In other words, believers are considered the Lord’s inheritance! As the body of Christ, we will enhance the Lord’s glory forever. We are considered the Lord’s inheritance.

As believers, we not only have an inheritance in the spiritual land (Ephesians 1:14), but we ourselves are the Lord’s inheritance (Ephesians 1:18). The Lord’s portion is His people, and in that sense then, we ourselves are part of the spiritual land. I think we see that truth pictured here in Joshua 19. Joshua received a city of his own people as his inheritance in the central part of the land, and there Joshua built and dwelt in the midst of his people (v50). This is a beautiful picture of our doctrinal point, that the Lord’s portion is His people.

In John 17 our Lord prayed for those whom the Father had given Him: “*I have revealed You to those whom you gave Me out of the world*” (v6). And verse 9: *I pray for.... those You have given Me...*” Also verses 20-23: “*I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one...*” What a blessed truth! The Lord’s portion is His people.

Practical Application

Let's set the example, like Joshua.

You might think that Joshua would choose the best of the Promised Land for himself. After all, as the great leader and victorious military general, he deserved it! What do you think our present political leaders would have done in a situation like this?

However, Joshua did **not** choose the best of the Land for himself! In fact, he made a very modest request -- and it looks like he may have chosen a bleak and rocky hillside that others probably rejected. I’m reading Joshua 24:30 “*And they buried him within the border of his inheritance at Timnath Serah, which is in the mountains of Ephraim, on the north side of Mount Gaash.*” It doesn’t sound like the most fertile area, does it? But you see, Joshua chose selflessly.

Joshua’s life is a great model for others to follow -- including us! All the way through his life, Joshua was a godly model. Joshua and Caleb were the only men of faith who fully trusted God when Moses sent out spies to check out the Promised Land. Joshua was Moses’ faithful assistant all the way through the wilderness, and he led Israel as they fought the battles in the conquest of the Promised Land. Now Joshua wanted to settle in the midst of his people as a continuing example. He was a man of noble spirit who practiced self-denial.

Listen to what we read of Joshua in his younger days, in Exodus 33:11, “*So the LORD spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. And he would return to the camp, but his servant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the tabernacle.*” What a glowing testimony about young Joshua! Joshua was a godly, spiritual and selfless leader all his life. No wonder God used him!

What a wonderful type or picture of Christ! What a great model for us -- as a pattern for our lives, and as a model for helping others. Let’s set the example, like Joshua!