

Meditations on the Book of Joshua

Joshua 13

Division of the Land — The Portion of Levi

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much for me? Or have you realised that the conflict is but leading you on to that blessed moment when God will say: "And the land had rest from war"?

The second part of the book (Joshua 12-24) treats of the division of the land. Possession follows victory.

But after what manner will the people enter upon the enjoyment of their inheritance? Here again, as during their warfare, we shall trace the same exhibition of weakness on their part, side by side with the grace of God which granted the enjoyment of His gifts.

Joshua 12 is the recapitulation of Israel's victories. Thirty-three kings, of whom two were on the other side of Jordan, have fallen before the Captain of the Lord's host. God reckons to His people the victories which He had given them. The Lord attributes to faith, all that grace has wrought in us, and that faith has laid hold of.

One more point I would notice. The Lord does not enumerate our victories until warfare is over, Until the goal is reached, the believer should not be occupied with his progress. The apostle says: "forgetting the things that are behind," The race is not the moment for pausing; the apostle had to reach forward to the things that are before, and every backward glance was not only lost time, but a positively evil thing, inasmuch as it divided the thoughts, affections, and aim of his heart, and hindered him in doing "one thing." (Phil. 3: 13, 14)

Ah! when the goal is reached, it will be time enough to enumerate our victories, and God will not leave the charge of this to us; He will reckon them Himself. Meanwhile, then, let us run that we may win Christ; let us fight that we may receive the prize. The end of the struggle is near, and others have already gone before us. May we be enabled to say with them: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."

Joshua 13

DIVISION OF THE LAND

I will take up this chapter with Joshua 15-19, reserving Joshua 14. for a special study by itself.

The enemies are all conquered, but not all driven out. Enemies, there will always be, until the coming of the Lord. "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." (1 Cor. 15: 26) But Israel has to dispossess them; as long as they possess anything, the enjoyment of the people of God is not complete; and more than this, they are allowing in their midst what might

continually cause them to fail. If the enemy is not destroyed, he will not be slow to lift the head and corrupt the people, if he cannot overcome them.

Such in fact was the snare when the Israelites were peacefully established in the land of their possession. It says of the two and a half tribes: "Nevertheless the children of Israel expelled not the Geshurites, nor the Maachathites; but the Geshurites and the Maachathites dwell among the Israelites unto this day." (Joshua 13: 13) And of Judah it says: "As for the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem unto this day." (Joshua 15: 63) And of Ephraim: "And they drove not out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer; but the Canaanites dwell among the Ephraimites unto this day, and serve under tribute." (Joshua 16: 10) Finally of Manasseh: "Yet the children of Manasseh could not drive out the inhabitants of those cities; but the Canaanites would dwell in that land." (Joshua 17: 12; compare also Judges 1: 17-36)

There may have been, as we see in these passages, more or less faithfulness displayed, in reducing the Canaanites to submission, but not one tribe was up to the height of his calling.

What was the result? Under this influence it was not long before all the worldly principles, against which Israel had been contending, entered into their midst. We see in the prophets that lusts, confidence in their own strength, turning to the nations for help, formed part of their very existence. More than this, the idolatry of the Canaanites spread like gangrene amongst them, and they ended by defiling themselves with all the gods of the Gentiles. Corruption, lying, unrighteousness, contempt of God, violence, open rebellion, everything in a word in which consisted "the iniquity of the Amorites," and for which the judgment of God overtook them, became the sad portion of the Lord's people. In last, terrible to say, Israel himself takes the place of, and becomes, so to speak, this very army of the Canaanites led by Satan against the Lord. They reject and crucify Christ, the Son of God!

Jehovah is long-suffering towards them; He makes urgent appeals to them, sends partial judgments followed by momentary deliverances and fresh appeals. "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done to it?" But at length final judgment overtakes them. They are carried away beyond Babylon, and scattered amongst the nations. But here we have another, and a marvellous thing. If man responsible has reached the end of his history which closes in judgment, God has not come to the end of His resources. "The gifts and calling of God are

without repentance." To be able to bless them, God must bring them to Himself in quite a new condition. He will cause them to share in the blessing of the new birth, according as it is written: "I will take away the stony heart out of their flesh, and I will give them an heart of flesh." (Ezek. 11: 19) He will act on their consciences to bring them back; He will write His laws in their hearts; He will give them the knowledge of the forgiveness of sins, and of the blessed relationship to Himself into which He will bring them. All their lost blessings will then be recovered in a far more blessed way. This is the scene so touchingly depicted in Hosea 14, Israel after being restored to Jehovah, seeking of Him the blessings of the new covenant in his cry: "Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously, so will we render the calves of our lips." (v. 2) There we see the remnant relinquishing all worldly support, all confidence in an arm of flesh, all false gods, and in their desolation becoming acquainted with the mercy of God on which all their blessing depends. "Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses; neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, ye are our gods; for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy."

Notice too, in these chapters what minute care the Spirit of God takes to define the place and limits of every tribe, so that each may see and realise exactly their lot in the inheritance. It is the same now for us individually. God has given to us each our definite place and duties in the body of Christ. Every member of Christ is responsible to have the consciousness of it, and to act consistently with it, so that the energy of life, which flows down from the Head to the members, may find them to be vessels prepared for His work, and contributing to it all together, moved by a common spring of action. (Eph. 4: 16)

THE PORTION OF LEVI

Let us now consider the portion of the tribe of Levi. (Joshua 13: 14, 33) By the commandment of the Lord, neither Aaron (Num. 18: 20), nor the priests, nor any of the tribe of Levi could have any inheritance in Israel. Their inheritance was on the one hand, "the Lord God of Israel," and on the other "the sacrifices of the Lord God of Israel made by fire." It is the same for us, His heavenly people. We have no portion on earth, but our privilege is to stand before God and to serve Him, and more than this to possess Him, to have communion with Him in the heavenly places, with the Father, and with the Son, who is with Him. But our portion in the Son is also "the sacrifices of the Lord made by fire"; that is to say, Christ according to all the perfection of His work and His Person before God; Christ, the perfect Man, the cake of fine flour anointed with oil, and covered with frankincense; Christ as a victim, the burnt offering, the