

Overview Of Joshua 13-21

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Overview of the Entire Section

13:1-14:5, Divine Command and Summary of Obedience

Three points here that we shall consider in more detail later:

Explanation: Joshua can no longer lead the people, so the responsibility for completing the conquest must be divided up among them.

Example: Previous division of Transjordan to RGM/2.

Exception: Levites (13:14, 33; 14:3b-4).

14:6-17:18, Distribution to Judah and Joseph

Apparently done while the Tabernacle was still at Gilgal; cf. 18:1.

18-19, Distribution to the Other Seven Tribes

18:1: In Deut 12:10-11, 14, the Lord reserves the prerogative to choose the location for the Tabernacle, and apparently he has chosen Shiloh as its first location. As soon as the allocation including this site is made (to Ephraim), they move the Tabernacle there. This will be a more central location than Gilgal down in the Jordan valley.

18:2-10: The other tribes are reluctant to proceed with the partitioning, perhaps because now that the new location for the Tabernacle has been chosen, they don't want to move away from it. So Joshua sends them out to catalog the remaining land for division.

18:11-19:50 describes the resulting tribal territories.

19:51, Summary of Distribution to the Seven Tribes

20:1-21:42, Levitical Appointments

Done in two stages:

20, Cities of Refuge, responsible for judging capital cases (v.4).

21, Levitical cities throughout the various tribes; it turns out these include the cities of refuge. Thus in the providence of God the elders of these cities would be levites, with special knowledge of the Scriptures and thus particularly suited for the work God assigned to them.

21:43-45, Summary

Compare this with the opening, "There remaineth yet much land to be possessed" (13:1) and "There stood not a man of all their enemies before them" (21:44). Where they were bold to fight, they won. But they were often reluctant to fight, and as a consequence did not enjoy the blessings that could have been theirs.

13:1-14:5, Divine Command and Summary of Obedience

Now return to the command/obedience section we noticed at the beginning of this section.

Structure (see handout)

13:1-7 is God's command to Joshua, with the summary of execution in 14:1-5.

Both command and summary focus on the 9.5 tribes, so by way of balance we are reminded that the 2.5 Transjordanian tribes already have their allotment

- Summary in 14:3
- Detail in 13:8-33

The detailed description of the Transjordanian territory is in turn divided into summary and detail by the two references to the exclusion of the Levites (13:14, 33), which also comes up in the execution paragraph (14:3b,4).

So we have three themes across command and execution sections:

- A: Distribution of the land to the 9.5 Cisjordanian tribes
- B: Distribution of the land to the 2.5 Transjordanian tribes
- C: Exclusion of the Levites

Command section is A(BCBC), while execution is A(BC)A.

- *AX → AXA is folding*
- *BCBC → BC is undoubling*

So what? Draws our attention to the three themes, and then leads us to meditate on what the Lord has for us in each of these.

Command and Execution (13:1-7; 14:1,5)

13:1, Joshua can no longer lead the people, so the responsibility for completing the conquest must be divided up among them.

- Compare the work of the Lord Jesus (the second Joshua) and his disciples. In both cases the Joshua begins the work and sets the standard, but it is God's pleasure that it should be carried to fruition through the multitude of the people.
- This basic pattern leads us to compare Joshua-Judges with the Gospels-Acts, the first member of each pair giving the leader's foundation, the second the work of the followers.
- What a contrast! Judges is marked by failure and defeat, Acts by victory and the irresistible spread of the gospel. The difference is the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit that the church enjoys under the New Covenant.

14:1, cf. 19:51, Eleazer joins Joshua in managing the division.

- There are three anointed positions in Israel: prophet, priest, and king.
- The scriptures know of Israelite kings who are prophets (David) and priests who are prophets (Caiaphas), but never an Israelite king who is a priest. This fundamental division of power is

maintained throughout the OT. Civil and spiritual authority are vested in separate individuals. When one seeks to usurp the role of the other (e.g., Uzziah offering incense in 2 Chr 26:16-21), God's judgment falls.

- Only two exceptions: the non-Israelite king Melchizedek (Gen 14:18), and the Lord Jesus, who as God's distinctive Messiah (anointed one) occupies all three offices, and will rule as both king and priest ("after the order of Melchizedek," Heb 5:10; 6:20) in the Millennium.

Previous Division of Transjordan (13:8-13, 15-32; 14:3a)

The details in 15-32 are included here so that we have documentation on the Transjordanian territories comparable to that which we will read about the Cisjordanian ones in the following chapters.

13:15-23, Inheritance of Reuben

Previously occupied by Moab, and under the terms of Deut. 2:9, Israel was not to occupy it.

The shift comes when Balak king of Moab, without provocation, seeks to defeat Israel through Balaam, Num. 22-24. Balaam comes from Pethor, in Mesopotamia, Deut. 23:4.

He was unable to curse them, but God's wrath fell on them because of their idolatry with the god Peor (cf. 13:20; "House of Peor," Num 25:3, "Baal-Peor"). According to Rev 2:14, the Moabites instituted this seduction at the instruction of Balaam.

Note v.22. Although Balaam returned to his home after his abortive attempt to curse Israel (Num 24:25), apparently he returned, for Israel slew him there during the war against the Midianites (Num 31:8).

Lesson: We need to be on the look-out for Satan's attacks through worldliness.

13:24-28, Inheritance of Gad

Ramoth Mizpeh "lookout heights" v. 26 may equal Ramoth Gilead "the heights of Gilead," which we know from 21:38 was also in Gad, and perhaps also Mizpeh in Gilead, which was the home of the judge Jephthah (Judg 11:34), who delivered Israel from the Ammonites (Judg 10:6ff).

Lesson: Beware rash oaths, which in Jephthah's case go along with ambition for power.

13:29-31, Inheritance of half-Manasseh

Probably the tribe in which Jabesh-Gilead was located. When the Ammonites besieged this town (1 Sam. 11), Saul delivered it, and they remembered his kindness by retrieving his body and burying him after he fell in the Philistine war on Mt. Gilboa (1 Sam. 31:11).

Lesson: Thus they showed their distinction from the name of their ancestor, "Forgetfulness." We should show gratitude and honor to those who have helped us in our spiritual battles.

Levitical Exception (13:14, 33; 14:3b-4)

Why are they excluded? 14:4 gives one reason, to which we can add two more.

Overview of Joshua 13-21

- 14:4, to make room for two sons of Joseph among the twelve sons of Levi, per Gen. 48:5
- to fulfill Jacob's prophecy of Gen 49:5-7, in punishment of the slaughter of the Shechemites in Gen 34:25
- to prepare for the role described in Mal. 2:7, as the teachers of God's law to Israel

Lesson: Was it a good thing or a bad thing for Levi to be scattered in Israel? Jacob meant it as a curse, but God, in fulfilling that curse, turned it into a blessing and an opportunity of ministry for Levi. He is able to make all things work together for good for his people, Rom. 8:28.