

Joshua

November 8, 2009

Joshua 12-15

I. Major Conquest is Done

The major conquests in the land are done, those that are led by Joshua where Israel acts collectively as a nation. There is still much more to be conquered, but these additional conquests are to be done by the individual tribes.

Chapters 12-21 give a summary of what was conquered and how it was to be divided among the tribes. Little vignettes are scattered throughout these accounts, making them a little more personal and emphasizing points of interest to the author.

II. List of Conquered Kings: Josh 12

The various kings that were conquered are now listed. As is often the case in this book, we start with Moses, summarizing his accomplishments as a model for Joshua's accomplishments. So the first kings listed are from the conquests east of the Jordan River.

In some cases, the king was taken, but the city was not, as in Jerusalem. In other cases of exception, both the king and city were taken, but apparently the city was retaken later by the Canaanites as we see a second taking of the city later in the OT, usually Joshua or Judges. An example would be Hebron.

III. Remaining Conquests: Josh 13:1-6

While the book of Joshua highlights the success of the conquests in the land, there are still much left to conquer; this additional territory is listed, the Philistines being the most problematic later to the Israelites.

Joshua gave three farewell speeches in chapters 22, 23 and 24, probably akin to the Deuteronomy sermons of Moses. He was 110 years old when he died...so, he might have been "old" and "well advanced in years" for a long time. This does not help us with how long that it took to conquer the land. If he was 30 years old in Exodus where he was called a young man, he would have been about 70 when they crossed the Jordan. Many suggest that his age here is 85 (or less) since that is the age given for Caleb in the next chapter.

IV. The Battle: Josh 13:7-23

As with the listing of the conquered kings, we see the division of the land east of the Jordan before the land west of it. Again, Moses' actions are used as a model for Joshua's. Most of the account has been provided several times already. The author appears to want us to see that Joshua is walking fully in Moses' footsteps, high praise when we consider how Moses is characterized in the Bible.

V. Introduction to Land Distributions: Josh. 14

This chapter is an introduction to the land distributions, perhaps the most important part of the book to its original recipients. To us, it is rather dull, but notice how much space that it takes up...from chapters 14 to 19, plus additional related chapters (such as the listing of the conquered kings); about half the book is devoted to the topic. The introduction includes the allocation for Caleb.

As Moses gave out the Trans-Jordan areas, so Joshua will administer this distribution. Eleazar, the son of Aaron, would have been not just a priest, but also the High Priest. He would have been the one casting the lot. Note: "Clans" is a somewhat elastic term. At a minimum, it meant that at least one layer of leadership below the tribe leader was involved.

Concerning verse 4, there are actually 13 tribes in Israel, descended from the 12 sons. Joseph's tribe became the biggest before the Diaspora and was divided into two parts with the tribe descended from the younger son, Ephraim, eventually becoming the dominant tribe of the northern kingdom; the entire country was called Ephraim, with its capital city, Samaria, becoming the title for the central area of the country by the time of Jesus. Thus, there is two ways to get to twelve tribes; include Joseph and Levi, or break Joseph into two tribes excluding Levi.

The story of Caleb is one of five such stories related in chapters 14-21. If the men of Judah discussed more with Joshua than the situation with Caleb, it is not mentioned explicitly in Scripture. Perhaps, this refers to when the tribe of Judah, the biggest tribe given the division of the tribes of Joseph, came forward to get its allocation. The reference to Kadesh Barnea refers back to Numbers 13-14. At that time, the LORD told Moses that only Caleb and Joshua would enter the land; now we Caleb being successful in the land. The indication of "Kenizzite" has caused much discussion. Part of the problem is that this is a tribe recognized to be in the land at the time Abraham:

Gen 15:18-21

18 On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram and said, "To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates — 19 the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, 20 Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, 21 Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites."

NIV

It is not clear why this designation is given to Caleb's father. There might have been an ancestor named Kenaz to which it referred. Othniel is called a Kennizite and is shown to be descended from Kenaz in 1 Chronicles 4:13. Some of Caleb's descendants are named Kenaz.

VI. Judah's Portion: Josh 15

While Caleb's portion was probably given out of order in the way it occurred, or perhaps Caleb received the first allocation in Judah. Judah was the biggest tribe...so it probably went first for this reason. Of course, we know many reasons why it would eventually be the first among the tribes. Remember that the lots are controlled by God...so, each tribe and clan gets what He wants them to get.

The last part of the chapter deals with Jerusalem, and might be a parallel passage to:

Judg 1:8

8 The men of Judah attacked Jerusalem also and took it. They put the city to the sword and set it on fire.

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Actually Jerusalem is in Benjamin territory, but that tribe had been unable to conquer Jerusalem as well:

Judg 1:21

21 The Benjamites, however, failed to dislodge the Jebusites, who were living in Jerusalem; to this day the Jebusites live there with the Benjamites.

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Clearly the story with Jerusalem holds a warning for the Israelites. They will need God's help to conquer their territory.

122 cities are mentioned in this chapter. 83 of them are basically unknown outside of this chapter or similar mentions elsewhere in the OT.