

Taking Hold of the Promise

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[0 : 00] Well, I don't know how you felt when you heard the Joshua reading for tonight. It wasn't all that riveting, was it?

Not like last week where we saw God fighting for his people with hailstones and the sun standing still. I mean, that's the stuff of Hollywood movies, isn't it?

I even hesitated giving such an exciting passage to Adam last week to preach on because, well, it's exciting. While this week I've got passages like Joshua 15 that we heard where it says, the allotment for the tribe of Judah, according to its clans, extended down to the territory of Edom, to the desert of Zin in the extreme south.

The southern border started from the bay at the southern end of the Dead Sea and dot, dot, dot. You're on the edge of your seats, aren't you? And on it goes for several chapters. But here's the thing.

The Israelites would have been on the edges of their seats. This was exciting stuff for them. You see, these chapters from 13 to 21 are all about who gets what land.

[1 : 11] It's all about Joshua dishing out their inheritance, allotting their part of the promised land. And so if you just look at the headings in your Bibles for a moment, chapter 15 is the allotment for Judah.

And then over the page in chapter 16, you can see the allotment for Ephraim and Manasseh, Joseph's two sons. And then again, if you turn over a page to chapter 18, you've got the allotment for the rest of the land.

Down the bottom you've got Benjamin and across chapter 19, Simeon and Zebulun and so on. It's all about the allotment of the land to the tribes.

And if you're an Israelite, a member of one of these tribes, it would have been exciting to hear what land you were getting. Our kids went to a friend's birthday party when they were younger.

And when they walked in, they saw this big box of lolly bags. You know the lolly bags that you get at the end of the party that kids get? It's kind of like on the next slide. Here's an example of some lolly bags.

[2 : 08] And they even had their names on them. It wasn't Mark and Alyssa's name. It was our kids' names. But you get the idea. And when our kids saw this big box full of lolly bags, their eyes lit up.

And the host saw their eyes and said, yep, this one is yours right here. It even got your name on it. And at the end of the party, the host gathered all the children and started handing out these lolly bags.

And they were so excited. And they were the best behaved they were the whole night. You see, this is what it would have been a bit like for Israel. And so when we read the allotment for the tribe of Judah extended to Eden, where the northern border started from the Jordan, went up to Beth Holgoth and continued to Beth Arabah, we've got to think Mark's lolly bags started with the yellow banana lolly, past the orange tube, north of the milk bottle, chocolate and past the flavoured teeth.

You see, while Hollywood would never do a movie on these chapters of Joshua because they're not exciting to us, they were for the Israelites. They were receiving their promised land, their inheritance.

And they were receiving it so that they might settle down in it. And while we find all these place names is hard to relate to, there's still an important lesson for us in it tonight.

[3 : 22] But first, let me give you a quick overview of where we're at in the book. So on the next slide, the book of Joshua can be broken up like this. In chapters 1 to 4, about Israel entering the land, you know, sending the spies across the Jordan River and so on.

In chapters 5 to 12, about Israel conquering the land or rather God conquering it for them. And so we saw that really culminate last week. And then chapters 13 to 21, which we're going to try and look at one hit tonight, about settling the land.

And then chapter 22 to 24, Joshua summons Israel three times and gives them some final instructions about serving God while in the land. But tonight's section actually begins with a problem.

So turn with me in your Bible to chapter 13, verse 1, and to point 1 on your outline. So chapter 13, verse 1. When Joshua had grown old, the Lord said to him, you are now very old.

And there are still very large areas of land to be taken over or possessed. I love it how God sees it, calls it as he sees it. Joshua, you're old.

[4 : 32] I turned 40 last week and my kids said to me, Dad, you're old. Thanks. But Joshua is older. Notice, he's very old. But do you notice the real problem?

There are still large areas of land that have not yet been taken. That is, there are large areas not yet possessed. And so on the next slide, we've got a contrast.

Don't worry about looking at the text. Just look at the colors. The pink is what they are possessing. That's what they have occupied. The green, however, is what they've still got to go. As you can see, God is right, as usual.

There are still very large areas to be taken hold of. But we need to remember two things here. First, the land is conquered now. The war has been won.

And although there are still large areas remaining and battles still to go, they are more like mopping up operations against rebel strongholds. The effect of the chapters 10 to 12 is to show us that the land effectively has been conquered.

[5 : 38] Remember last week, God fought for Israel with hailstones and extended daylight. We missed chapter 11 and 12. But just look at the end of chapter 12 for a moment. You have a list of kings that have been defeated.

And notice how the narrator is tallying them up. The intended effect is one of victory and conquest. So I'm going to try something a bit different here. I'm going to read the name, the king of Jericho.

And I want everyone else to respond with one. That's all we have to say is the word one. Not hard, just the word one. And as I say the word one, we'll go to the next slide on the word one.

Okay, let's see how this goes. Let's see if we can get the effect. All right. So the king of Jericho. The king of Ai. The king of Jerusalem.

The king of Hebron. The king of Jameth. You see what's happening? It's like he's just tallying them up. And you can imagine that as he lists all these kings, the feeling in Israel.

[6 : 38] Yeah. Look at what God has done for us. To the point where on the next slide and in verse 24, he tallies 31 kings in all.

Can you feel the effect? It's meant to convey victory and conquest. And as we saw from chapter 10, God fought for Israel and they have conquered the land.

And so later on in chapter 18, verse 1, you can see at the bottom of the screen there, we are told that the whole country was brought under their control. The whole country.

You see, the country is effectively being conquered. But there are large states or provinces still resisting. And so there will need to be more battles fought.

But the war has been won. The land is conquered. That's the first thing to remember. The second thing to remember is just as God fought for them to win the war, he will continue to fight for them to win the battles until they take hold of all the land.

[7 : 45] Have a look at chapter 13, verse 2 and following. This is the land that remains all of the regions of the Philistines and the Gesherites from the Shihol River on the east of Egypt to the territory of Ekron on the north.

All of it counted as Canaanite, though held by five Philistine rulers in Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath and Ekron. The territory of the Avites on the south.

All of the land of the Canaanites from Arar of the Sidonians and as far as Aphek and the border of the Amorites. The area of Byblos and all Leblon to the east from Baal Gad below Mount Hermon to Lebo Hamath.

As for all the inhabitants of the mountain regions from Lebanon to Meshroth, that is all the Sidonians, I myself will drive them out before the Israelites. Now the NIV here has a new paragraph at verse 6, as you can see, and it makes it sound like that God will only drive out that last bit.

But there's not meant to be a new paragraph there. It's meant to just keep flowing like this. From below Mount Hermon to Lebo Hamath.

[8 : 59] And all the inhabitants of the mountain regions from Lebanon to Meshroth. I can't say all that. All the Sidonians, full stop. I myself will drive them, that is all the places I've just listed from verse 2, out before the Israelites.

That's how it's meant to read. You see, God will keep fighting for them to drive out the remaining rebels. And because God will keep fighting, then Joshua is to start dividing.

You see the rest of verse 6? Be sure to allocate this land to Israel for an inheritance, as I've instructed you, and divide it as an inheritance among the nine tribes and half of the tribe of Manasseh.

You see, Joshua is to start dividing the land among the tribes as though it's all theirs now. Even though it has not yet all been possessed.

And so you've got this kind of now but not yet tension with the land. It is all theirs now. It's being conquered. The war has been won. The country is defeated.

[10 : 12] But it's not yet all being possessed, taken hold of, or settled. There are still large areas or provinces holding out. But because God has won the war and because God will continue fighting the battles, then all the land is as good as theirs now.

And so before he dies, Joshua is to divide all the land so that Israel may take hold of it all. Now you may have noticed that God said to divide, in verse 7, the land between the nine tribes and the half-tribe of Manasseh.

But how many tribes were in Israel? This is not rhetorical. Someone call out. Twelve. We've got two people awake. Excellent. So twelve tribes of Israel.

There were twelve tribes based on the twelve sons of Jacob. So why does God say to divide the land between only nine and a half of them? Well, because two and a half tribes have already received the land east of the Jordan.

And so on the next slide, you've got this map, which hopefully you would have received as you came in. I've got a red line on it to show the River Jordan. And on the east side, that's your right hand.

[11 : 23] Okay? On the east side, the right hand side, you've got two and a half tribes have already been given their land. But what God is talking about in Joshua 13 is all the other land on the left side, the western side of the Jordan River.

That's why he says just divide it between the nine and a half tribes. You might notice on your map in front of you that Manasseh was huge and it had to be split into a half-tribe on the east and a half-tribe on the west.

But the point is that God is talking about the land on the western side of the Jordan. That's the land on view here. But the point is Joshua is to divide the land between the tribes now, put each tribe's name on it as though it was theirs now, even though they've not yet taken hold of it all.

It's like those lolly bags I mentioned at the start. They were our kids' bags even before they fully took hold of them. The host had bought them with her money and even put our children's names on the bags.

It was their portion, their inheritance. The bag then and there was theirs, even though they had not yet fully taken hold of it. So too for Israel. God had fought to give them the land.

[12 : 43] He had conquered it. It was all theirs now. And so Joshua was to start putting their names on all their land now, even though they had not yet taken hold of it all.

So that's what Joshua starts to do, which brings us to point two. He starts to put their names on the land. Now usually I'd work our way through the text like we've done so far with chapter 13, but the division of the land goes on for another eight chapters.

And as I said, while it would have been somewhat exciting for Israel, it's harder for us to follow, isn't it? Because these place names don't mean much to us.

So it's probably best if I just show you on the map and give you an overview from the Bible. So have your map and your Bible in front of you. So have a look on the eastern side of the Jordan River and you can see two and a half tribes, Reuben down the bottom, then Gad in the green, and then Manasseh or half of Manasseh on the top.

And Joshua starts by reminding those two and a half tribes what they've already been given. So have a look at chapter 13, verse 8 in your Bibles. He says, The other half of Manasseh, the Reubenites and the Gadites, had received the inheritance that Moses gave them east of the Jordan, as he, the servant of the Lord, had assigned it to them.

[14 : 07] You see? And the rest of chapter 13 is then telling us what each of those two and a half tribes received. I should also point out here that Manasseh was not actually a son of Jacob.

And sometimes we get confused about how you get 12 and where did Manasseh come from and so on. So just very quickly on the next slide, you've got how it works out.

Abraham had a son called Isaac who had a son called Jacob. He was also called Israel. That's why Israel is called Israel, right? And from Jacob, you had 12 sons which are listed there.

The only thing is Levi, he became a tribe of priests and he didn't get any land. But to keep the number 12 for the 12 bits of land, Joseph, well, his tribe was split into two after the names of his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh.

And so that's how it all works. But the Levites became priests. And as I said, they did not receive any land as an inheritance. And so if you look in your Bibles, down at chapter 13, verse 14, it says, But to the tribe of Levi, he gave no inheritance since the food offerings presented to the Lord, the God of Israel, are their inheritance as he promised.

[15 : 30] And then if you turn over the page, the last verse of the chapter 13, last verse of chapter 13, we also read, But to the tribe of Levi, Moses had given no inheritance.

The Lord, the God of Israel, is their inheritance as he promised them. So the inheritance for the Levites was the meat portions left over from the sacrifices and God himself.

They were in a privileged relationship with God and were able to be in God's presence like no other tribe. Far from missing out, they had an extraordinary inheritance, one which we as Christians know even more so.

Since in Christ, we are all priests, if you like. But that's for another time. Now, in case you're wondering where the Levites would live, later on in chapter 21, we're told about all the towns they are given, the towns which are scattered throughout the land so that they could teach their fellow tribes about God's word.

But because they don't get any land, then as I said, they are not counted in the 12 and then Joseph becomes two, Ephraim and Manasseh. So that's chapter 13.

[16 : 39] And then we move to chapter 14 and to all the nine and a half tribes on the west side. And we might move a bit quicker here. So have a look in your Bibles at chapter 14, verses 1 to 5. Now, these are the areas Israelites received as an inheritance in the land of Canaan, which Eliezer, the priest, Joshua, son of Nun, and the heads of the tribal clans of Israel allotted to them.

Their inheritances were assigned by lot to nine and a half tribes as the Lord commanded through Moses. Moses had granted the two and a half tribes their inheritance east of the Jordan.

We've just read about that in chapter 13. But he had not granted the Levites an inheritance among the rest. For Joseph's descendants had become two, Manasseh and Ephraim, as I just explained.

The Levites received no share of land but only towns to live in with pasture lands for their flocks and herds. And so the Israelites divided the land just as the Lord had commanded Moses.

And so that's what you get in the rest of the chapters. I showed you before from those headings. Chapter 15, you've got the allotment for Judah. Chapter 16, you've got the allotment for Ephraim and Manasseh and on it goes.

[17 : 49] So these chapters are about dividing the land. They're about handing out all their inheritance now, even though they've not yet fully taken hold of it all. And the point of handing it all out now is that they might then go and take hold of it all and not just stay in the bits they've already got.

And I think that's why the allocation of the Western land actually begins with Caleb. We actually skipped over that in chapter 14, verse 6. Do you see there? Chapter 14 is the introduction to the land, the nine and a half tribes.

But before going to Judah, we've got this story about Caleb. Why? Well, because the narrator is giving us an example of how Israel were to take hold of all their land, including the bits that remained.

And so we're at point three on your outlines and we'll pick it up at chapter 14, verse 6. And as I read about Caleb, see if you can work out what kind of man he is.

So chapter 14, verse 6. Now the people of Judah approached Joshua at Gilgal and Caleb, son of Jephthah, the Chesnite, said to him, You know what the Lord said to Moses, the man of God at Kadesh Baneah, about you and me.

[19 : 04] I was 40 years old when Moses, the servant of the Lord, sent me from Kadesh Baneah to explore the land the first time Israel came to the promised land. And I brought him back a report according to my convictions.

But my fellow Israelites who went up with me made the hearts of the people melt in fear. I, however, follow the Lord my God wholeheartedly.

So on that day Moses swore to me, The land on which your feet have walked will be your inheritance and that of your children forever, because you have followed the Lord my God wholeheartedly.

Now then, just as the Lord promised, he has kept me alive 45 years since the time he said this to Moses while Israel moved about in the wilderness. So here I am today, 85 years old, and I'm still as strong today as the day Moses sent me out.

I'm just as vigorous to go out to battle now as I was then. Now give me this hill country that the Lord promised me that day. You yourself heard that the Anakites were there and their cities were large and fortified.

[20 : 09] But, the Lord helping me, I will drive them out just as he said. Then Joshua blessed Caleb, son of Jephna, and gave him Hebron as his inheritance.

So Hebron belonged to Caleb, son of Jephna, the Chesnite, ever since, because he followed the Lord, the God of Israel, wholeheartedly. Hebron used to be called Kiriath Abba after Abba, who was the greatest man among the Anakites.

Then the land had rest from war. What sort of man was Caleb? Repetition is usually a good way to work out the big point.

What's repeated three times? Wholeheartedly. Caleb served God wholeheartedly. What does that mean? Well it means he stood on God's promises.

He trusted God's promises so much so that he lived in light of them. That's what Caleb did the first time they came to the promised land. Only he and Joshua believed that God would fight for them and give them the land as he promised.

[21 : 14] And here again, Caleb trusts God's promise back in chapter 13 that God would keep fighting for Israel and drive out these people. Even the Anakites who were giants that Israel was afraid of.

In fact, Deuteronomy chapter 3 tells us that these giants were about 4 metres tall. And so on the next slide is an artist's comparison which I've told is pretty accurate. This guy, they reckon, is Og.

Deuteronomy chapter 3 4 metres tall. I mean, even the name Og sounds like a giant's name, right? But did you notice what Caleb said about these giants?

See verse 12? Now give me this hill country the Lord promised me that day yourself heard that the Anakites were there, these big guys in their cities were large they had to be large to accommodate these guys fortified but notice the Lord helping me I will drive them out.

Do you see what kind of man Caleb is? He trusts God wholeheartedly. How cool is Caleb? Give me the giant country because with the Lord helping me piece of cake.

[22 : 29] you see how much he trusts God's promise? Of course Caleb still had to fight the battle but he trusted and served God so much so that he willingly pressed on to take hold of all that God promised him.

And as I said this positive example of Caleb is placed before any of the nine and a half tribes get their land because it's meant to be an example for them to follow.

In fact the narrator even comes back to Caleb again to highlight this. So chapter 15 he starts giving the land out to Judah but then halfway through he stops and in verse 13 he picks up Caleb's story again just in case they're forgotten.

See verse 13 of chapter 15 in accordance with the Lord's command to him Joshua gave to Caleb son of Jephthah a portion of Judah that is Hebron and from Hebron Caleb drove out three Anakites the giants of those names the sons of Anak there you go done Caleb did it see Caleb believed God's promise and so he pressed forward and he took hold of God's promise he took hold of all that God had promised him he possessed all the land even from the giant Anakites this is the example Israel was to follow and to highlight this the narrator then gives us a negative example in contrast and so the next tribes to be allocated their land are Ephraim and Manasseh in chapter 16 so turn over the page of chapter 16 we're not going to go through it all and during their allotment the narrator again stops to give a negative example which makes Caleb look even better and so have a look at chapter 17 verse 12 the right hand side of your

Bibles there chapter 17 verse 12 yet the Manassites were not able to occupy these towns for the Canaanites were determined to live in that region however when the Israelites grew stronger they subjected the Canaanites to forced labour but did not drive them out completely notice these guys aren't even giants and yet they don't drive them out they were hard to start with but even when they could drive them out they don't and in so doing they disobey God who told them to so that Israel would not be tempted to worship foreign gods what's more they complained you see verse 14 the people of Joseph Ephraim and Manasseh said to Joshua why have you given us only one allotment and one portion for an inheritance we are numerous people and the Lord has blessed us abundantly if you are so numerous Joshua answered and if the hill country of Ephraim is too small for you you'll go up into the forests and clear land for yourself there in the land of the

[25 : 21] Perizzites and the Rephites and Anakites were both giants similar people but the people of Joseph replied oh the hill country is not enough for us and all the Canaanites who live in the plain have chariots fitted with iron both those in Beth Shan and its settlements and those in the valley of Jezreel but Joshua said to the tribes of Joseph to Ephraim and Manasseh you are numerous and very powerful you will have not only one allotment but the forest hill country as well clear it and its farthest limits will be yours though the Canaanites have chariots fitted with iron and though they are strong you can drive them out I've done a number of funerals and sadly sometimes at the funeral the adult children afterwards I hear them complaining like kids that they did not get enough inheritance at a funeral of the deceased but that's how these two tribes are acting here but you notice

Joshua's response if you want more land then go and clear it settle in it you are powerful enough to drive them out to take hold of the land that is yours in other words stop whinging and start trusting God do see how this is a complete contrast to Caleb who said with the Lord's helping me I'll take on the giants see while the tribes of Judah and Joseph step up first to receive the inheritance and in so doing the narrator gives us a positive example and a negative example for the nations the rest of the tribes to follow I'm going to stop there and think about point four for us I'm hoping that you've started to see some parallels for us we're at point four now as we heard last week God has won the war for us not against giants and foreigners but against sin and death as we read on the next slide

I think from 1 Corinthians I think it should be it says the sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law but thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ see God gives us victory over sin and death through Jesus doesn't he for it is Jesus who died on the cross to pay for our sins to die our death that is take our judgment so that we who believe don't have to be judged and Jesus rose from the dead to prove that he has conquered sin and death for us and this means that we who believe have a certain hope of receiving an inheritance God has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and into an inheritance that can never perish spoil or fade kept in heaven for you God has conquered the big enemies for us and offers us an inheritance that will never perish spoil or fade for us who believe in

Jesus so the first question for us tonight is do you believe in Jesus do you believe he died in your place to suffer death and judgment for your sin have you accepted him as your king and savior for us who have then do you realize that we have already started to receive this inheritance as the verse below says that God raised us up with Christ and seated us past tense with him in the heavenly Jesus you see like the Israelites we have already begun to receive our allotted inheritance we've already received eternal life spiritually now though not yet physically which will come later that's why in our second reading Paul says our citizenship is in heaven that's where we belong that's where our names are already written because there's a sense in which we are there already spiritually you see we have received in spiritual inheritance now even though we have not yet taken hold of it physically and so like

Israel that's what we are to do we are to press on and take hold of what God has won for us when he conquered sin and death in Christ and we are to remember that God not only fought for us to win the war over sin and death as we heard last week but he will continue to fight for us to win the battles against trials and temptations so we are to be like Caleb who with the Lord's help pressed on to take hold of what God promised we're to be like the apostle Paul who said forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus we're not to be like Ephraim and Manasseh who feared obstacles and refused to trust God and so failed to receive all that God wanted to give him we're not to pursue the things of this world when our inheritance in the next is so much better so let me finish with two stories one who's a bit like

[30 : 44] Ephraim and Manasseh and one is a bit like Caleb I'm not sure if I mentioned a guy called Christy before but he was at one of my old churches he liked the community of mates that church gave him and he liked the idea of forgiveness and he especially liked the assurance of going to heaven that Christ gives us but after a while work took over he worked long hours he got a promotion which meant he earned more money but to keep the more money he had to keep working more hours and so the spiral started he started missing Bible study and then church because of course he had to work had to and in the end he feared missing out on getting something in this life so much so that he stopped trusting in Jesus who offered him so much more in the next life and instead of pressing on toward the goal of glory he now no longer calls himself a Christian contrast

Chris with a couple at our church who have a severe down syndrome son which means I've probably given away their identity but it's a huge battle for them sometimes literally when he doesn't want to do something or cannot communicate with them because of his limited vocabulary they will always need to care for him despite being grandparents themselves and wanting to enjoy their retirement but instead of blaming God they continue to trust God and serve God whole heartedly they do lots around this church actually like teaching CRE and Sunday school and so on even though they've got their hands full with their son why do they do this well not only because Jesus died for them but because they trust God's promise of their heavenly inheritance where their son will enjoy a new Downs syndrome free body you see here's a couple who like Caleb trust God despite obstacles and battles in life and they trust God so much so that they press on serving wholeheartedly straining says Paul towards what is ahead pressing on to take hold of their heavenly inheritance in full

I don't know what battles you have to fight in your life what struggles you've had to face what things tempt you to complain or give up trusting God but we must remember that while God does not promise to save us from them he does promise to help us through them to help us keep fighting those battles and so like Caleb like Paul we are to strain towards what lies ahead with the Lord's help to press on towards the goal to keep serving the Lord wholeheartedly until we take hold fully of the prize of glory let's pray our gracious heavenly father we do thank you for this reminder from history of Israel we thank you for the reminder that you fought for them to conquer the land and that you continue to fight with them through the battles in the land we thank you for the reminder to press on and to take hold fully what you have promised us father thank you that in christ we are guaranteed a heavenly inheritance and that by your spirit you will continue to help us fight the battles in this life until we fully take hold of what you have promised us help us in this we pray for jesus sake amen com to