

Joshua 16-17 “Only one lot?”

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I. Intro

We again shall focus on several vignettes for our application found in the 16th and 17th chapters which describe the appropriation of the inheritance for Joseph's two son's Ephraim and Manasseh. As mentioned Manasseh was born first and when it came to the time of blessing them Jacob put his right hand on the wrong child or so thought Joseph but Jacob said no Manasseh will become great but Ephraim will become even greater. There are two things that seem to indicate that this foretold the future with regards to Manasseh being as his name suggests “*forgettable*”.

1. The first is something we have already mentioned and it has to do with the fact that half the tribe chose to be outside the land of promised wanting the land that they determined better suited them economically instead of the land that better suited them spiritually.
2. The second part of this we will find in the 17th chapter as we examine the fact that they were prideful wanting more than what God gave them while not wanting to already possess what God had given them.

Here is what we can see generally speaking, *greatness isn't a birth right*. Instead as David proclaimed in 2 Samuel 22:36 *it comes about through being continually acquainted with God's gentleness* as David declared, “*Your gentleness has made me great.*” All this just goes to show that, within God's family, our greatness isn't conditioned upon our numeric standing it's based upon His greatness.

II. Vs. 16:1-10 Not according to numbers

Vs. 1-4 The closing section of the book deals with *the principals of the possession of the land of promise by God's people*. At the encampment at Gilgal the tribes were positioned around the tabernacle and as such each tribe in order of size would come to Joshua and Eleazar at the tabernacle to find out what lot of the promised land was to be theirs. What a visible example for each tribe this scene was as it was repeated as each tribe stepped forward to claim their inheritance. You see *at the center of the tribes was the Lord* and *it was He who was not only giving them the land it would be He who would enable them to possess* what He was giving them. *All they needed to do was to keep Him at the center of worship in their lives*. Each tribe had its appointed place according to the measure of God and each tribe was given the grace and power to possess the gift. **No tribe could claim that the gift was given with out the grace to possess.**

These verses set out the boarders of Josephs 1 and ½ sons that choose the land of promise. The only comment I'd offer is that oft time it is difficult to do the right thing when you have family or other close friends going the other direction. You can not allow yourself to become people pleasers you must chose for yourself whom you will follow.

Vs. 5-10 Ephraim whose name means “*double fruitfulness*” was no different then the rest of the tribes with regard to not succeeding in driving out the Canaanites from their allotted land. We, in this life will never completely eradicate the flesh from our lives but that doesn't mean that we should stop trying. Of further interest is according to 10:33 and Joshua 12:12 Gezer was a city that Joshua had already conquered so there couldn't have been that much work yet to do. The truth is based upon 1 Kings 9:16 Gezer didn't come under the control of the nation until the time of Solomon. This brings up the possibility that they were unsuccessful because they wanted slave labor which would make things easier. What is certain is that if they had the power to make the folks from Gezer forced laborers they clearly had the power to drive them out. It appears that the

tribe Ephraim failed to drive out the Canaanites from Gezer (*that which divides*) because they had a **divided life** and wanted peace and a life of ease at any price.

This be a lesson for us that we can make no compromise with the areas of our old nature even if we try to enslave it sooner our later we will succumb to the flesh it is why Paul repeatedly admonishes us to reckon the old man to be dead in Christ.

III. Vs. 17:1-13 The Lord is in the details

Vs. 1-6 One of the interesting side notes to these words is that the decisions made by Joshua were founded upon God's word given to Moses which is a reminder that God's people had God's written word in the early days of the nation. The point I'm making is that often those who are critiques of the Bible attempt to defray its authority by suggesting that it was written long after the events recorded. Here is another in a long list of examples that ought to silence the critiques. Not only did they have the writings of Moses they appealed to them as authoritative in matters of practice.

In the nation of Israel, the sons inherited the property but the daughters of Zelophehad saw to it that the daughters weren't discriminated against (vv. 3-6; Num. 27:1-11). Like the daughter of Caleb, these women had the faith and courage to ask for their inheritance; and they even changed the law! Forty-five years earlier, before Moses had died these five gals approached Moses saying in verse 3-4 *"Our father died in the wilderness; but he was not in the company of those who gathered together against the Lord, in company with Korah, but he died in his own sin; and he had no sons. Why should the name of our father be removed from among his family because he had no son? Give us a possession among our father's brothers."* So Moses brought their case before the Lord. And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: *"The daughters of Zelophehad speak what is right; you shall surely give them a possession of inheritance among their father's brothers, and cause the inheritance of their father to pass to them."* But later on in Numbers 36 Zelophehad's brothers came to Moses with a stipulation (verses 3-4) *"Now if they are married to any of the sons of the other tribes of the children of Israel, then their inheritance will be taken from the inheritance of our fathers, and it will be added to the inheritance of the tribe into which they marry; so it will be taken from the lot of our inheritance. And when the Jubilee of the children of Israel comes, then their inheritance will be added to the inheritance of the tribe into which they marry; so their inheritance will be taken away from the inheritance of the tribe of our fathers."* So Moses heard from the Lord and said *"every daughter who possesses an inheritance in any tribe of the children of Israel shall be the wife of one of the family of her father's tribe, so that the children of Israel each may possess the inheritance of his fathers. Thus no inheritance shall change hands from one tribe to another, but every tribe of the children of Israel shall keep its own inheritance."*

Now you may be thinking what does all this matter why bring it up? Well Matthew traces Jesus genealogy through Joseph, Jesus earthly father but there is a problem in this as we read in Matthew's account that in verse 11 *"Josiah begot Jeconiah (also know as Coniah) and his brothers about the time they were carried away to Babylon."* But according to Jeremiah prophecy in 22:24, 28-30 we read *"As I live," says the Lord, "though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, were the signet on My right hand, yet I would pluck you off. "This man Coniah a despised, broken idol--A vessel in which is no pleasure? Thus says the Lord: 'Write this man down as childless, a man who shall not prosper in his days; for none of his descendants shall prosper, sitting on the throne of David, and ruling anymore in Judah."* What this tells us is that **though Joseph was a legal heir to the throne due to the failure of Jeconiah he could not be a spiritual heir to the throne.** This means that the heir to the throne would (according to Numbers chapters 28 and 36) pass to another descendant who would have to marry with in her own family. And guess who that was? Well it was Mary through another of David's descendants Nathan. Thus Joseph's first born son Jesus got to claim His inheritance to the throne of Israel through his father Joseph marrying His mother Mary and thus becoming the only rightful heir to the throne. Hey saints **the Lord is in the details** there isn't anything that escapes His hands. That means that the Lord will make certain that He will bless you with all that is yours in heavenly places if you will but go after it.

Vs. 7-13 Here again we see that like his brother Ephraim the half tribe of Manasseh *"could not drive out the inhabitants of the cities"*, as the Canaanites were determined to dwell in the land. Further more we are told that it took even longer for this half tribe to enslave the Canaanites as did their brethren

The flesh is determined; in fact, the word here means to be rooted. That old man of ours is going to dig in his or her heels but we have to be more rooted and grounded in God's love to uproot the flesh out of the land of our hearts. Far too often we are satisfied to temporarily enslave our flesh instead of eradicating it.

Vs. 14-18 We are prone to blame our lack on God not being good towards us instead of realizing that we have been given plenty of blessing if we are just willing to take the mountains of our lives. "If you're a great people then go and fully occupy what the Lord has given you", Joshua tells them. **These two tribes hadn't taken what God had given them because it was going the require hard work and personal sacrifice. They wanted the blessings and promises without the sacrifice!** Now contrast these fellows next to Caleb who said give me the toughest mountain with the biggest giants where they say, give me "**easy street**" where I don't have to move a mussel and get to just reap the rewards. **If you desire more out of your life, then you first must be faithful out of what He has already given you.**

So the two sons of Joseph approach Joshua because of their combined size was greater than any single tribe and they said they didn't have enough room. "We're a great people so why have you given us only one lot to share?" This reminds me of my own heart, "**Lord, it's not fair; you've short changed me I need more than what you've given me You're holding out on me!**" You can hear the pride in the words of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh as they came to Joshua complaining that the Lord hadn't given them enough room. It's worth noting that the people of Ephraim and Manasseh seemed to be given to criticism and pride. They not only created problems for Joshua but also for Gideon (Judges 8:1-3), Jephthah (12:1-7), and even David (2 Sam. 20:1-5). There were three things that they no doubt took pride in:

1. All the other tribes were direct sons of Jacob but these two boys Jacob choose personally adopt and to especially bless them.
2. They had multiplied greatly sense the last census.
3. Finally based upon Numbers 13:8 Joshua was from the tribe of Ephraim.

But if you compare the statistics given in numbers 1:32-35 and 26:34 and 37, you learn that the descendants of Joseph had increased from 72,700 to 85,200, although Ephraim only had 8,000 fewer people. That means six other tribes had also increased their numbers since the last census. This meant that the children of Joseph weren't the only ones who were fruitful.

Joshua is addressing his family and relatives in his reply in these verses. "If you are such a great people, now you will have the opportunity to prove it!" Joshua tells them, "Go out and clear the land of obstacles and enemies and as far as you want to do that you will possess all that you can clear and defeat". Hey folks, that's the way it is in our lives as well. **Far to often we are telling our Joshua that there isn't enough room for us, not enough blessings coming our way so He needs to give us more** and His response is, "**Hey brothers, sisters I've given you everything in heavenly places, you just got to chop down the obstacles and defeat the enemies they are keeping you from possessing it!**" **It's not our boasting but our believing that gives us the victory and gains us new territory.** Have you ever noticed that those who talk the most often accomplish the least, so you got to walk your talk!

This tribe complained that they were a great people but had not been given by God a portion worthy of their greatness. They spoke to Joshua saying that their past should have warranted a greater reward, they were too big for too little. They further suggested in verse 16 that what had been given them was full of obstacles and enemies which kept them from possessing what was too small to begin with. Their pride was based upon past press clippings which mean nothing in the God's economy, **He isn't impressed by our past affiliations not our present number it is in our present believing not in our past boasting that God looks at.** Greatness is never going to be measured by our accomplishments or affiliations it will be only be measured by the faithfulness of our Lord on our behalf who has always been 100% faithful even when we have been faithless.

Are you presently discontented at your "LOT" in life, desiring a greater opportunity that will show case your abilities? Do you feel as though you have been short changed and have been given land in your life way beneath your potential? Well may I suggest that God has not short changed you and that the problem is not in your LOT in life! No your problem is that you have failed to realize that the opportunity you seek is only to be found in obstacles and opposition! Notice that their complaint is lodged at not enough space but Joshua quickly tells them that

opportunity abounded through obstacles and opposition! Where they saw no opportunity Joshua told them that they had the greatest of opportunity because they had great obstacles and opposition.

We are so prone to complain against our Lord for His lack of giving us what our greatness demands when all the while His giving has been done in a manor that requires us conquer the obstacles and defeat the opposition. We all demand change but the change we seek far to often is a change in our LOT in life and we fail to realize that the change that is to be lasting is the change that will occur **through our LOT in life** as our LOT will change us and it is that change alone that will enable us to possess all that God has for us. Allen Redpath makes this pointed observation to his readers saying, “*Do you not see that the real trouble in your life is not that you don’t have enough scope for your gifts, but that you are **not living to capacity where you are?**”* He goes on to make this statement, “***Unless you live to capacity in your present sphere, you will be doomed to tragedy when you arrive to where you think you should be.***” “**He who is faithful in a little will be given much more**”, Jesus said. The dead wood in our lives must go says our Joshua, clear those trees from your life and you will have clearer vision and more room. All of us need to lay the ax of the lord to the dead wood in our lives don’t we? Stop crying about what you don’t have and start possessing what you do have, is Joshua’s reply. Oh but the enemy is gigantic and has iron chariots you say. So do you not know that he has not right to the land he is squatting on, drive him out and clear out the dead wood. **These obstacles and opposition are not impressed with your press clippings; he doesn’t care about your reputation or your affiliation.** No you’re going to have to get your ax out of the closet and show him you mean business. Oh that we would all have the prayer of Jabez in 1 Chron. 4:10 when he called upon the Lord, “*Oh, that You would bless me indeed, and **enlarge my territory**, that Your hand would be with me, and that You would keep me from evil, that I may not cause pain!*” So God granted him what he requested.” But Jabez never prayed that until he had already cleared out the obstacles and defeat the enemy in the land of promise.

There is an amazing paradox with regards to our inheritance in Christ, “***Those whose life and blessings increase will do so at the expense of themselves. In other words, the more of God’s blessings and promises they occupy the less you will see of them and the more you will see of Christ.***” Ah but the opposite is equally true the more you notice of the person the less of Christ and the less of possession of God’s blessings and promises. **Here’s to disappearing all together in the midst of the expanse of His grace!**