

Joshua 19:1-51 “Lots of Lessons”

I. Intro.

II. Vs. 1-23 Lessons from Simeon, Zebulun, and Issachar

III. Vs. 24-51 Lessons from Asher, Naphtali, Dan and Joshua

I. Intro

We come now to the appropriation of the inheritance of the remaining 6 tribes by lot and finally the division of the land for Joshua all in 51 verses. The significance of this chapter of course would have been for those 6 tribes having neglected their inheritance were now motivated by the 21 men who were sent out by Joshua to describe the land of their inheritance. But again we believe that there is *truth for our application* to be found in these verses as well. *Principals to learn and pitfalls to avoid* as we go after every spiritual blessing given to us in Christ. So with that as our aim we shall listen to the Holy Spirit as we read of the division given for these tribes.

II. Vs. 1-23 Lessons from Simeon, Zebulun, and Issachar

Vs. 1-9 Twice we are told that Simeon (heard or hearing) received their inheritance within the inheritance of Judah (verse 1 and verse 9). The reason for this was twofold:

1. First, from Judah’s perspective the land given was larger than they needed according to verse 9.
2. Second, this was in fulfillment of Jacob’s prophetic words to Simeon in Genesis 49:5-7 where Jacob said, “Genesis 49:5-7 “Simeon and Levi *are* brothers; Instruments of cruelty *are in* their dwelling place. Let not my soul enter their council; Let not my honor be united to their assembly; For in their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they hamstrung an ox. Cursed *be* their anger, for *it is* fierce; and their wrath, for it is cruel! I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel.” These two brothers had not demonstrated godly character as seen in Gen. 34:25-29 where they had killed all the men of the city of Shechem for the actions of one man who had taken advantage of their sister Dinah. Because of this they receive a blessing from their father that fits tis action.

Their problem was anger that was rooted in their self-will which fits Simeon’s name “hearing” or “heard”. In the 34th chapter of Genesis we are told that they killed the men of the city and also that they “hamstrung an ox” which is where they cut the tendons of the leg. This action would be done to horses because of their military usage but not to oxen as they were only useful for peaceful purpose. As such it reveals the heart of these sons was for vengeance. God’s blessing to them in light of this was to divide them and scatter them so that this attitude would not gather steam. From that incident to their exodus from Egypt they were the 4th largest tribe but 35 years later when the census was taken we see that 63% of their tribe perished in the wilderness and they became the smallest tribe. Their position allotted to them in the land of promise was surrounded by the tribe of Judah and they would be mostly absorbed by that tribe. The towns allotted to them are divided into two groups:

A. Verses 2-6 13 towns situated in the south county

B. Verse 7 4 towns, two of which were in the south and two in the low land

If you look up these towns you find that they already are mentioned among the towns of Judah which reveals that the tribe of Simeon for their own blessing was being integrated into the tribe of Judah so that they would become more fruitful and not left to their own devices. From Judah’s perspective they gained numbers to inhabit what they could not of. The lesson we learn from this is something that Clint Eastwood said in his 1973 movie “*Magnum Force*” where he says, “*A man’s got to know his limitations!*” Sometimes “MORE” is not better and we would be destroyed by it. Levi was to be scattered among the tribes caring for the spiritual needs among the tribes.

Vs. 10-16 Zebulun (dwelling) is given a lot next and it was also according to Jacob’s prophecy in Genesis 49:13 “*Zebulun shall dwell by the haven of the sea; He shall become a haven for ships, and his border shall adjoin Sidon.*” This prophecy deals with the location of the tribe as it

bordered the Sea of Galilee on the east and the tribe of Asher was between it and the Mediterranean coast line and as such they looked to the Sea on both of their borders. In 1 Chron 12:33 the tribe is noted for its faithfulness to David and its supply of the largest amount of soldiers of any of the tribes. There is no mention of blessing of this tribe other than its location and that they would achieve financial prosperity do to trade and commerce. It was this land and the land of Naphtali that bordered it that Jesus commented upon in Matthew 4:15-16 *“The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, By the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles: The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death Light has dawned.”* The “dwelling” of Zebulun was a place that faced two waters but it like the allotment to Naphtali was the first to be invaded by the Gentile nations over the centuries. With that said it was Isaiah in chapter 9:1-2 that, *“Nevertheless the gloom will not be upon her who is distressed, as when at first He lightly esteemed The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward more heavily oppressed her, By the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, In Galilee of the Gentiles. The people who walked in darkness Have seen a great light; Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined.”* What we learn from Zebulun’s allotment is that sometimes that which seems to be prosperous can be a highway to captivity as well. But we also learn that there are untold blessings even in the midst of captivity if we allow God to navigate the for us. The blessing was NOT found during the calm seas and prosperous times they were found and realized during the darkest of times as a “GREAT LIGHT” walked amongst them in the dark hours.

Vs. 17-23 The 4th lot fell upon Issachar (reward) and their geographical region was south of the Sea of Galilee to the valley of Jezreel also know as Megiddo. In Genesis 49:14-15 Jacob prophesied that, *“Issachar is a strong donkey, Lying down between two burdens;*

¹⁵ He saw that rest was good, And that the land was pleasant; He bowed his shoulder to bear a burden, And became a band of slaves.” Jacob described Issachar as being a character as a “strong donkey” and historically this tribe did most of the labor and was content with what they had. In Numbers 26 they are recorded as the 3rd largest tribe but though they had the numbers to fight for the nation chose not to do so. Because of this they were often enslaved by invading armies and that is what Jacob said as they *“became a band of slaves”*. Judah subdued her enemies, Issachar was mastered by hers. Issachar was like a donkey possessing physical strength but a weak character and a spiritually weakness that made them lazy and docile. God had given them “pleasant land” a “good rest” but they didn’t use these as tools to pursue victory. The lesson we learn from this tribe is that, *“which we fail to master will end up being our master”!*

III. Vs. 24-51 Lessons from Asher, Naphtali, Dan and Joshua

Vs. 24-31 The 5th lot fell too Asher (happy or blessed). In Genesis 49:20 Jacob said that, *“Bread from Asher shall be rich, and he shall yield royal dainties.”* Asher was a wealthy tribe and their land was below Mount Carmel to the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. In

Deuteronomy 33:24 Moses said *“Asher is most blessed of sons; Let him be favored by his brothers, and let him dip his foot in oil.”* The produce grown in this area will fill the king’s tables and many of used Moses words to dig for oil in this area but the oil in Israel was found at the toe of the foot in the bay of Haifa. Historically this tribe seems to be of little importance except for what we are told in Luke 2:36-38 where we read that *“there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fasting’s and prayers night and day. And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem.”* What a moment for this tribe as an 84-year-old widow who didn’t depart from the temple serving with fasting and prayers lays eyes upon Jesus and gives thanks then started telling everyone that Jesus was the One they had all been waiting for.

Vs. 32-39 The 6th lot fell to **Naphtali** (*wrestling or struggles*). Like Zebulun this tribe will be linked to the prophetic words of Isaiah. Jacob said of this son in Genesis 49:21 *“Naphtali is a deer let loose; He uses beautiful words.”* In the book of Judges, we learn that Deborah came from this tribe but we also realize that most of Jesus’ ministry was done of the shores of Galilee along the area of the lot given to Naphtali and clearly they heard Jesus’ beautiful words.

Vs. 40-48 The 7th lot fell to Dan (judge of judgment) and in Genesis 49:16-18 Jacob said, *“Dan shall judge his people as one of the tribes of Israel. Dan shall be a serpent by the way, a viper by the path, that bites the horse’s heels So that its rider shall fall backward. I have waited for your*

the path, that bites the horse's heels so that its rider shall fall backward, O LORD!" Dan was going to supply judges like Samson but they would also be *"a serpent by the way, a viper by the path, that bites the horse's heels So that its rider shall fall backward."* Dan was a tribe that introduced idolatry to the rest of the nation causing them *"fall backward."* Based upon Daniel 11:37 and Jeremiah 8:16 some feel that the antichrist will come from this tribe. The land which Dan occupied became the center of idol worship in Judges 18:30 and it is for this reason that it is omitted in the listings of the tribes in Rev. 7:5-8 although it is mentioned as having land during the 1000-year reign of Jesus. The question is why did this tribe go north when they were given the land right on the Mediterranean Sea between Ephraim, Benjamin and Judah? They were given the land that now is in the area of Joppa and Tel Aviv but this is also where the Philistines lived so they went north and fought against Leshan and took it instead. It may have been easier to begin with but in the end they were the furthest north of all the tribes and were easily defeated and fell into idolatry to keep the peace. Here is another lesson in that **what is immediately easier is not always better if we are moving away from what the Lord has given us!**

Vs. 49-51 After everyone else had received their lot Joshua is given his inheritance. His land is like Caleb's hilly full of obstacles and based upon what we are told in Judges chapter 2 his lot was on the north side of the Mountain of Gaash which means "earthquake" which suggests that his land was a fault line! This was no paradise, no fertile valley and instead was a seismic fault line not a scenic vista. The city of this area was called Timnath Serah or "abundant portion" which gives you a great view of how Joshua viewed this blessing. Here was a man who laid down his life and draws his lot last and instead of getting a "fertile valley" or a "beautiful vista" got a "seismic waste land" and yet he still names it "abundant portion". Joshua seems to understand that the greatest blessings to be found may be subject to a little shaking up now and again and that difficulties often produce a "abundant portion"! Joshua understood that the beauty of our lot is not in where it lies but in whom dwells in it with us, Jesus!