

Message #27

Joshua 15:1-63

When it comes time for rewards to be given, it is a pure Biblical fact that some will be more honored than others. Some children of God will be great winners and some will be losers. Some will end up being vessels of honor and some vessels of dishonor. There will be some with crowns and some without crowns.

The principle of giving high honor to some and not such high honor to others can certainly be seen in the distribution of the land to the tribes of Israel. All were in the land, but not all received the same kind of land. One of the sons of Israel, who receives high honor and receives some wonderful land is Judah. Joshua does not divide the land into equal parts and if you look at a map that point is obvious.

Now Judah was no sinless saint. He was the fourth son of Leah (Gen. 29:31-35), Jacob's first wife. Judah had been somewhat of a womanizer. He had been sexually promiscuous with women who were not Israelites (Gen. 38:2, 15-18). However, Judah had certain qualities that made him an award-winner:

- 1) He was a brother who looked out for the welfare of other brothers (Gen. 37:26-27).
- 2) He was a brother who would admit sin and turn from sin (Gen. 38:26).
- 3) He was a brother who was willing to sacrifice his own life for another brother (43:8-11; 44:33).

When we get into eternity, it will be Judah-types who will be honored at the highest levels. They will have been willing to deal with sin, not try to cover it, not be content in it, but will confront it. Judah-types also look out for the needs of others in the family of God.

In Genesis 49:8-12, Jacob made some remarkable predictions concerning Judah:

- 1) His brothers would praise him.
- 2) He would defeat his enemies (49:8b).
- 3) He would be esteemed by the other sons (49:8c).
- 4) He would be a mighty son (49:9).
- 5) He would be a ruling and judging son (49:10).
- 6) He would be a blessed son (49:11-12).
- 7) He would inherit plush land, overflowing with grapes, wine and milk (49:11-12).

Now we do not know how much Joshua remembered about Genesis 49; but God remembered every bit of it and when it came time to cast lots for the land Judah was to receive, God made certain this was the land they got. The point so see here is that:

GOD IS ALWAYS FAITHFUL TO HONOR THOSE WHO ARE FAITHFUL TO HIM AND EVEN THOUGH THOSE BLESSINGS MAY NOT COME IMMEDIATELY, THEY WILL COME EVENTUALLY.

God is always true to His Word. He does not forget any promise. Now the tribe of Judah was Caleb's tribe and they were the first to receive the allotment of land, which included land already given to Caleb.

Now there are three land distribution facts that are seen in this chapter:

LAND DISTRIBUTION FACT #1 – The dimensions of land given to Judah. 15:1-12

Arthur Pink said Joshua 15-19 presents a tough job for a Bible expositor:

- 1) There is a list of places, some of which never show up in the Bible again.
- 2) There is a list of places we cannot specifically identify.
- 3) There is a list of places we cannot specifically locate.

But having said that, we still need to do our best with what God reveals. Now a general rule of land distribution is seen in Numbers 33:54—greater numbers of people got greater amounts of land.

The territory given to Judah was immense. Its eastern border was the Dead Sea (15:5) and its western border was the Mediterranean Sea (15:12). Its southern border angled south from the Dead Sea so that Kadesh-barnea was included (15:3) and its northern border ran irregularly from the northern tip of the Dead Sea north and then west, just skirting Jerusalem (15:8).

Many of the places listed in these verses we know nothing about. But when this land was distributed, we may be certain that the people knew these places precisely and so did God. This data is very precise.

There are three specific prophecies of Jacob that were fulfilled in this distribution of land:

- 1) Judah had land bordered by enemies which meant they needed to defeat them and that meant they need great leaders and great warriors to surface, like David, to arise in Judah (Gen. 49:8-9).
- 2) Judah received land that was rich in vineyard property (49:11-12). When Moses' spies first went into this land; they came back with a report that it was rich in grape production (Num. 13:23-24). Some get plush places to minister. Some get lean places to minister. God is sovereign in all of it.
- 3) Judah received the land of the scepter (Gen. 49:10). The ultimate power would come from Judah. This text is clear to point out that Judah received land that included Jerusalem (15:8). This is the place where David ruled and this is the place where ultimately Christ will rule.

Before we move on let us make some key observations:

- 1) God always rewards and honors those who are faithful to Him. You do not have to be sinless; you must be faithful.
- 2) God determines who receives rewards and who does not.
- 3) God's rewards will always be in precise conformity with what He promises in His Word.

LAND DISTRIBUTION FACT #2 – The dimensions of the land given to Caleb. **15:13-20**

Caleb was a big name in the tribe of Judah. At this point in the narrative, he is specifically singled out and the land he received is specifically identified.

Caleb went to work on driving out the enemies from his territory (**Josh. 15:14-15**). He is praised for elimination and extermination, not for peace negotiation. **Some people are praised for their additions; but God also praises faithful people for their subtractions.**

Caleb had asked for specific land on his 85th birthday and got it. He was 85-years-old and he is still driving enemies out of the land. If you were in Caleb's territory, if you did not get right with God, you got out of existence.

Now one of the major cities and apparently one of the most difficult cities was Kiriath-sepher. This was a very important city. We know from Judges 1:11 that it was also known by the name "Debir." The actual name "Kiriath-sepher" means city of "books" or city of "scribes." We learn from Joshua 11:21 that there were giants in this area. So we may assume that this was a scholarly-type city where giants and others went to learn. Now the learning was not that which brought glory to God. Caleb wanted this city and he offered a grand prize to take it.

He offered his own daughter, Achsah, in marriage to the one who attacked and captured Kiriath-sepher (**15:16**). She must have been very good-looking because Caleb is motivating the people by offering her as a reward.

It is a privilege to marry into a family that has been greatly used by God. I remember hearing Dr. Swindoll say one time that he felt when his daughter was going to marry a guy he thought it was like turning a Stradivarius violin over to a gorilla.

Now Caleb had a brave nephew whose name was Othniel (**15:17**). He not only captured Kiriath-sepher, but he also married Achsah and became Caleb's son-in-law, but he also would go out to become a judge (Judges 3:9-11).

Achsah, Caleb's daughter, convinced her new husband Othniel to ask her father for some extra land that included springs of water (**15:18**). The Negev area was dry land and she wanted springs of water (**15:19**). What we learn from **verse 19** is that Caleb gave his daughter her request.

This teaches us a couple of things:

- 1) It shows that Othniel has a legal right to this land.
- 2) It shows that Achsah would not be denied full blessings—she would not settle for anything less than land with water.

There is a great principle to glean from this. No matter what ministry God grants us, we need to not be satisfied until He makes it fruitful.

We need to ask God to refresh us from His Word and to keep us from ever being dry and barren. We need to ask God for Him to pour out His blessings on our lives and our church.

LAND DISTRIBUTION FACT #3 – The listing of the cities given to Judah. **15:21-62**

The main cities of the land given to Judah are named here. The thing this shows us is that these were real places.

There are 29 cities and their villages named in the south part of the land. **15:21-32**

There are 42 cities and their villages named in the western foothills. **15:33-47**

There are 38 cities and villages named in the central part of the land. **15:48-60**

There are 6 cities and villages named in the wilderness area which slopes down toward the Dead Sea. **15:61-62**

Judah inherited more than 100 cities. The only city they had problems with was Jerusalem.

According to **verse 63**, they could not rid Jerusalem of the Jebusites.

It is difficult to determine if Judah “could not” or “would not” remove the Jebusites. But it seems that all other cities were taken with ease.

Judah did receive a wonderful inheritance. The question for us is will we? There is no doubt that in eternity there will be governmental responsibilities.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS:

- 1) One does not need to be sinless to inherit a great inheritance. Judah proves that.**
- 2) One does need to be faithful and honest to inherit a great inheritance.**
- 3) God is always faithful to fulfill His promise of reward.**
- 4) We need to drive out all of our enemies. We need to keep going and keep fighting a good fight.**
- 5) Inheritances vary according to the numbers. Amount of faithfulness will determine it.**