

Benjamin's Allotment

Joshua 18:11-28

Preached by Phillip Kayser at DCC on Sunday, April 21st 2024

I. Introduction - The significance of Benjamin

Well - the distribution of the land that we just read may seem boring and irrelevant. And, honestly, I don't know of *any* preacher who has preached all the way through chapters 18 and 19. But I'm going to try to. And we will be seeing that there *are* wonderful truths scattered all through these chapters, and 1 Timothy 3:16 assures us that "*all* Scripture is given by inspiration of God, *and is profitable*" - and then it lists the things it is profitable for. So that means that this section we have just read *is* profitable for you. So put your minds and hearts in gear and let's see if the Lord speaks to you through this chapter.

Though Benjamin was one of the smallest of the twelve tribes (and was even called "little Benjamin" in Psalm 68:27), it had a *very* important place in Israelite history. Judges 20 and 1 Chronicles 12 are two places where their incredible ferocity and skill as warriors is recorded. 20,000 Benjamites crushed an opposing army of 400,000, and in a later battle, they were willing to be almost totally annihilated rather than yield in battle. Down through Israel's history, many Benjamites distinguished themselves as being so fierce, that God's prophecy in Genesis about Benjamin being as fierce as a ravenous wolf takes on new meaning. It's interesting how God makes people so different, and yet makes sure that each believer has an essential role to play in the kingdom. We need to value these differences. Don't write off the Benjamite-type Christians that you run across. You might have to keep them in check sometimes, but value them.

But as to the *importance* of this tribe, Ehud of Benjamin was one of the early Judges of Israel, and many civic leaders down through history came from this little tribe. Jeremiah was a Levite who had inheritance rights in Benjamin according to Jeremiah 32:8. Or you can think of Mordecai, the uncle and adviser to Queen Esther. But many leaders during the reigns of Saul (2 Sam 4:2), David (2 Sam. 23:29), and Solomon (1 Kings 4:18) came from this tribe. So I want to spend a little time looking at what was so important about Benjamin's inheritance. It was a rather odd inheritance, but God spends quite a few verses on it.

II. God's sovereignty (v. 11)

First, we have several hints of God's *sovereignty* in what they inherited. This was not simply the will of man at work.

A. Apportioned by lot (v. 11)

Verse 11 says, "Now the *lot* of the tribe of the children of Benjamin came up..." We've talked about this idea of the lot being cast before. It was a symbol of God's sovereignty. Any time you see lots mentioned, it is a hint at God's sovereignty.

Lots were sort of like dice. As border options were considered, the lots would be cast and it would rule out things for one tribe and give things to another tribe. So the world would look at this division as being by pure chance. That's what the *world* thinks of dice. But not in the Bible. Proverbs 16:33 says that "The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD." In other words, it is saying that even what some people consider to be random chance is completely controlled by the Lord.

And we will be looking at some of the beautiful structure and symmetry in this section that shows God's hand at work even in the *order* in which the land was distributed. It really is remarkable. Matthew 10:29 says that not one sparrow falls to the ground apart from the will of the Lord, and the next verse says that at any given moment, every hair of your head is numbered. You don't lose a single hair without it being a part of God's will. So for those of you who are losing hair, don't complain. God has a good plan for both hairiness and baldness. You cannot breathe in a dust particle without God having ordained it to be. As the Westminster Confession words it, "God from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely, and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass."

Of course, *ordinarily God wanted people to use Biblical wisdom when making decisions*. In fact, He *mandates* it. He doesn't want you to use the lot for every decision. He simply does not. Don't neglect your responsibility to make decisions by simply flipping coins. Not a good idea.

But in this case it was necessary. Why? Because there would have been endless debates as to which tribe and which family deserved to get better land if they had not left this totally in God's sovereign control. And in chapter 15 we looked at the limited situations where God says it is appropriate to cast dice to decide a situation and when it is not appropriate. I won't repeat what I said back then. *But this division of rugged hill country to Benjamin was purely God's sovereign decision, not the will of man*. And thus Benjamin could not complain about it. Based on God's sovereignty, let me point out three interesting facts.

B. Though Jacob played favorites (Gen. 37:1-11; 42:4,36), God did not (Gen. 49:27; Josh. 18:11-28; Judges 20-21)

The first is that even though Jacob sinfully played favorites among his sons (Jacob favored Benjamin), God did not. In Genesis 42, when Jacob sent his sons to Egypt, he let the other brothers go into danger, but he protected Benjamin, his remaining favorite. It's not good to have favorites like that. But Jacob did it - and with disastrous results. Favoritism does not imitate the heart of God. Genesis 42:4 says,

But Jacob did not send Joseph's brother Benjamin with his brothers, for he said, "Lest some calamity befall him."

Wow! What would the other brothers feel about that? It almost like Jacob would have been OK if calamity befell the other brothers, but not Benjamin. He later acts grieved over the possibility of losing Benjamin, but doesn't act as grieved over the possibility of losing one of his other sons. It was favoritism.

Yet when God made Jacob prophesy in Genesis 49:27, Jacob had no way of injecting his own desires or his own will into the prophecy. If it had been left up to Jacob, Joseph and Benjamin would have gotten the best and biggest portions of the land. But 2 Peter 1:21 says, "prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." Jacob was *forced* to prophecy something that he probably would have preferred *not* to prophecy. But the point is that all true prophecy is 100% the inspired word of God. So God made Joseph prophesy truly about Benjamin, saying,

"Benjamin is a ravenous wolf; in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil."

Not a fun prophecy about your favorite son. But it was God's very Word. And this is *exactly* what happened. In its early history (referred to in this prophecy as Benjamin's "morning"), Benjamin spent enormous energies in violent warfare - and sometimes in unjust warfare, almost getting exterminated in the process. Many commentators refer to the Benjamites as being some of the fiercest and most warlike of all of the tribes, sometimes being almost cruel in their early history. The brutal history of Judges 20-21 shows ravenous wolf-like behavior - absolutely despicable. It is not a history that Jacob would have *willingly* prophesied.

But the "evening" refers to the *latter* part of Benjamin's history, and Benjamin's later history was the opposite - it was *very* generous - dividing the spoil generously rather than keeping it for itself. And you can see this good behavior in the glorious battles under Saul, David, and Solomon, or even to the dividing of the spoil of Gog and Magog under Mordecai and Esther, who were Benjamites. Or it may even include the apostle Paul's spoiling of Satan's kingdom and *his* generous self-sacrificing attitudes. So this means to me that you are not chained by your ancestor's poor decisions. God can give each of you a new day and a new way by His grace.

But the point is, this rugged land was not apportioned based on what *Jacob* would have wanted Benjamin to receive. Jacob would have played unfair in Benjamin's favor. But God gave Benjamin exactly what was needed *for their future history*. He got a small rugged lot that helped to prepare Benjamin to play a vital role in Israel's later history. They remained faithful to Judah and to God and eventually played a vital role in maintaining the faith against the apostasy of the northern tribes. Deuteronomy 33:12 describes this later history in these words:

Of Benjamin he said: "The beloved of the LORD shall dwell in safety by Him, Who shelters him all the day long; and he shall dwell between His shoulders."

What does it mean that Benjamin would dwell between God's shoulders? It speaks of intimacy- a kid riding on his daddy's shoulders. That's a *wonderful* prophecy, right? Well,

commentators believe that it is reference to the temple being situated in the territory of this tribe. For example, Matthew Henry says,

though Zion, the city of David, is supposed to belong to Judah, yet Mount Moriah, on which the temple was built, was in Benjamin's lot. God is therefore said to dwell between his shoulders, because the temple stood on that mount, as the head of a man upon his shoulders. And by this means Benjamin was covered all the day long under the protection of the sanctuary (Ps. 125:2), which is often spoken of as a place of refuge, Ps. 27:4, 5; Neh. 6:10. Benjamin, dwelling by the temple of God, dwelt in safety by him.¹

In any case, in later history Benjamin would have a very favored and honored position from the time of King Saul to the time of Israel's exile into Babylon.

So let me make another application of what we have just talked about. We can trust that God knows best when He gives us far less than we might wish. We can thank him and use that small stewardship to the best of our ability. Benjamin certainly used their unique territory quite well in even its early history, but did so even more in its later history. And that their territory included some pretty important places will be seen when we get to its cities.

C. Benjamin sandwiched between the two brothers who looked out for him - Joseph and Judah (v. 11b)

But let's look at another sentence in verse 11. This too illustrates God's sovereignty. It says, "the territory of their lot came out between the children of Judah and the children of Joseph." In the prophecy of Moses, Benjamin comes right between the prophecies of Judah and Joseph (that's Deuteronomy 33:7-17). Likewise, when Benjamin came to Egypt with His brothers, both Judah and Joseph protected and favored Benjamin. It was Benjamin that brought reconciliation between Joseph and Judah. And the same was true of the tribes themselves in later history. And though the sons of Joseph (Manasseh and Ephraim) were rival tribes, Manasseh, Benjamin, and Judah became one country loyal to the Lord. This all illustrates that God had planned this all along.

D. The arrangement itself shows God's sovereign plan

And I've put a chart of the order in which all the tribes were given their land. This too is not by accident. It is laid out in chiastic form, with Shiloh, the spot where the tabernacle would reside for centuries being at the heart of the chiasm. Any time you see the middle point of the chiasm, it is the focus of what God is doing. And where He meets with His people is at the center. I love that!

¹ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 285.

But God ensured that on either side of the chiasm, the sons of Rachel would receive their land in chiastic order, with Joseph first and Benjamin next. And then the sons of Leah forming a parallelism on either side of the sons of Rachel, and then two sections outlining the allotments given to the Levites, and then discussions of the tribes who got allotments outside of Canaan proper. None of that would be possible apart from God's sovereign disposition by lot. None of this ordering was by chance. God was in sovereign control of the lot from start to finish. And as Romans 8:28 words it, he worked out all of those details for each one's good.

a Introduction (13:1-7) b Allotments outside of Canaan (13:8-33) c Levites (14:1-5) d Individual - Caleb (14:6-15) e non-Rachel - Judah (15:1-63) f Joseph (16:1-17:18) g Shiloh distribution (18:1-10) f Benjamin (18:11-28) e Non-Rachel - six sons (19:1-48) d Individual - Joshua (19:49-50) c Levites (20:1-21:45) b Allotments outside of Canaan (22:1-34) a Conclusion (23:1-24:33)

III. God's provision for families (vv. 11,20,21,28)

But moving on from evidences of God's sovereignty, we have another important subject that is mentioned four times. All the *families* within Benjamin are given land. This is not a state-owned operation. Far from it! In fact, if you study these two chapters in detail you will see that the only thing God gave to the state were borders. They owned their borders - that was it. *The families themselves owned the land.* So this speaks against socialism. And by the way, you don't really own your land if the government can tax it. Land taxation was an incredibly wicked scheme that our founding fathers would have shuddered over, and yet everyone takes land taxes for granted today. We should not. We should oppose land taxation as if it is theft - which it is. And if the EPIC tax gets through (whatever its deficiencies), at least you will own your land without taxation.

Notice that verse 11 says, "Now the lot of the tribe of the children of Benjamin came up *according to their families...*" The second sentence in verse 20 says, "This was the inheritance of the children of Benjamin, according to its boundaries all around, *according to their families.*" God made sure that all the families of Benjamin received allotments. Families were important to God, not just individuals. Some of the families received parcels of land within cities and districts around cities. Verse 21 says, "Now the cities of the tribe of the children of Benjamin, *according to their families,* were..." and then it lists some cities. The last sentence in verse 28 says, "This was the inheritance of the children of Benjamin *according to their families.*"

We will have more to say about this when we look at the other tribes, but God cares for extended families and nuclear families. Indeed, the family is the second most important government of all four governments that God has established. Let me remind you of those four governments again:

By far the most important government that God established was the first government - self-government of the individual. When God created Adam (all by his lonely), he established the responsibilities and liberties of self-government. And in the chiasm in your outlines you

will see two examples of individual humans - the property given to Caleb in chapter 14 and the property given to Joshua in chapter 19.

The next most important government that God established in Eden was family government. He established that when he created Eve and married her to Adam. So those first two governments (individuals and families) are governed by the freedom principle - where they have all liberties not expressly limited by commands or prohibitions. Adam and Eve didn't have to ask, "Can I eat from the banana tree? What about the peach tree?" They had total freedom to do anything except what God had prohibited.

What about church and state? Well, chapters 14-22 outline the boundaries given to the next two governments (church government exemplified in the synagogues established by the Levites who were scattered in every community in Israel, and state government outlined in the cities, districts, and states described in these chapters).

And whereas individuals and families have maximum freedom, synagogues and state governments were *hugely* restricted by what us Reformed people call *the regulative principle of government*. That principle states that church and state may only do what the Bible explicitly allows them to do. Why is that important? It is important because power is a limited commodity. If church and state increase in power, that growth in power will *always* be at the expense of individuals and families. So God is very explicit in the Bible about what church and state may do - which is not very much. Sadly, churches have become almost as bloated and overgrown as states have. And it needs to stop.

So we should take to heart the external and internal *boundaries* that God gives to the latter two governments. In modern times the state has grown to such huge proportions that it has severely limited the powers of church, family, and individual. So even though you may find the idea of boundaries to be a bit boring and unimportant, those boundaries illustrate the critical importance of the Regulative Principle of Government. If we want to protect the boundaries and rights given to individuals and families, we must keep civil governments from expanding their borders and their responsibilities and we must hem them in to exactly the limited authority that God has given to them. Hey! If we even hemmed government in to the original intent of the Constitution (imperfect as it was), we would be in pretty good shape. But the Bible limits the state even more. Boundaries are an important protection and Satan keeps trying to erase those boundaries.

IV. The geography (vv. 12-20)

So let's look at those boundaries. Benjamin's allotment was rather small. Are there any reasons for this? One reason may well be because Benjamin was the most fierce and war-loving of the tribes. That can be a good thing when his warrior mentality is harnessed to protecting God-given boundaries of tribe and nation - something that did indeed happen in much of Israel's history. But a warrior mentality must always be harnessed by God's law. The book of Judges shows the blessings of the state when that harnessing happens and the curse of the state when it does not happen.

So what were the boundaries given to Benjamin? It occupied a tiny strip of land between Mt. Ephraim and the Judean hills. The southern border was the valley of Hinnom immediately south of Jerusalem to a point north of the Dead Sea. Its eastern limit was the Jordan River, and its northern boundary with Ephraim ran from the Jordan River to Bethel - south of Lower Beth-Horon. This means that it was only 28 miles wide from West to East and only 12 miles from north to south. It's a pretty small territory.

But it was also an incredibly *important* territory. It occupied hilly country that strategically controlled key passes, but also had very fertile hill basins. This made the hardy warrior clans of Benjamin the *perfect* clans to protect Judah from invasion. God knew what He was doing when He placed the Benjamites there. He knew what He was doing. The Benjamites were rough and rugged highlanders who acted very similarly to the highlanders of Scotland. Leaders of this tribe who protected Israel include people like Ehud, Deborah, the powerful leaders in 1 Chronicles 27:21, the mighty captains of Saul's army in 2 Samuel 4:2, and of David's army in 2 Samuel 23:29, the skilled archers of 1 Chronicles 8:40, etc. These mighty highlanders sometimes used their skill for evil (as in Judges 20-21) and yet many *more* times they used their skill for good.

And I believe it may be because of the glorious history of Benjamin that Paul can twice call himself a Benjamite - once in Romans 11:1 and once in Philippians 3:5 where he says that he was "circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews." And the point is that being a Benjamite was for Paul a pretty cool ancestry.

V. The cities (vv. 21-28)

We will end with the cities listed, which is one kind of civil government.

A. 12 cities in the eastern portion (vv. 21-24) and 14 cities in the western portion (vv. 25-28)

Verses 21-24 mention twelve cities in the eastern portion of the state and verses 25-28 mention 14 cities in the western portion. And notice that verses 20 and 28 both mentioned that these cities with their villages are specifically said to be their *inheritance*. There are some people who think that cities are an evil that needs to be shunned and that only the countryside is good. Well, let me tell you something: people take their evil hearts to the countryside too.

In any case, God treats both cities and villages as being a gift of God. We must not despise God's inheritance. Yes, it is true that cities can produce concentrated evil. That's why the Canaanites were being judged. But cities can also produce concentrated good. Wherever there is a concentration of people like that, there can be a synergy of efforts that works for good or evil. And it is important that cities be *captured* for God and *used* for God. That won't happen until more Scripture-saturated Christians get elected to city, county, and state office.

Anyway, moving on, Benjamin preferred *not* to capture some of those cities. They let the Canaanites remain in charge - just like Christians today are content to let unbelievers rule in civics. That's not a cool thing. If you abandon the city, then you only have yourselves to blame if the city becomes more and more evil. We must be salt and light in the city. When Benjamin refused to capture those cities, the Canaanites continued to be concentrated centers of evil for quite some time - Jerusalem being one of those cities that remained under paganism for four hundred years after this chapter all the way up to the time of David. Their failure to do their duty meant that the Canaanites continued to influence them for generations. How sad!

But let's move on to some of the other cities. Interestingly, Beth Arbah is a city shared by two tribes - Judah and Benjamin, just as we have cities straddling the borders of two states today. So half of the city was under one jurisdiction and half under another state's jurisdiction. It can work.

Moving on, liberals like to claim that Joshua doesn't know what its talking about because the same cities are listed under more than one state. But Ophrah is a totally different city than the Ophrah in Manasseh. Ramah in verse 25 is totally different than the Ramah in Naphtali or another Ramah in Simeon. As one commentary says, Ramah "means 'height,' so it is not surprising that several places should be so named."² Likewise, it is not suprising that Mizpah, Gibeah, and Kiriath are similar names of cities in quite different tribes. Ten of the cities mentioned here are not mentioned anywhere else in Scripture. But they are mentioned here to illustrate that cities *themselves* have limited jurisdictions even if urban sprawl occurs.

B. The relationship of villages to cities (vv. 24, 28)

I'm going to wait till next time to look at the relationship of villages to cities and urban sprawl and related things. We won't have enough time today. But since the same issue is mentioned in that chapter, I can deal with it there. But I do find that subject very interesting.

C. Levitical cities were Geba (v. 24), Gibeon (v. 25), and Beth Horon (v. 13)

But I will briefly mention that there are three cities in our text where *Levites* lived. Remember that the tribe of Levi did not have its own state. Instead, the pastoral Levites were scattered in every locale so as to be able to be pastors for local synagogues. But in addition to *those* Levites, there were Levitical cities where *other* Levites could dwell. Some of these Levites were scholars who lived there permanently while others lived there when they were not on their cycles to work at the tabernacle, and later at the temple. We will

² David M. Howard Jr., Joshua, vol. 5, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 365.

have a lot more to say about them in chapter 21. But God blessed Benjamin with three cities full of clergy and scholars, and those would prove to be a powerful influence for good.

D. Bethel (v. 22) and Jebus/Jerusalem (v. 28) are the two most mentioned cities in the Bible

The last point simply mentions that two of the cities listed here (Bethel and Jerusalem) are the two most mentioned cities in the Bible,³ and they are here assigned to Benjamin. So even though Benjamin may have thought that it got short-changed on the size and nature of the land, it would be the location of Israel's future capitol and temple and Bethel would be the place where a lot of prophetic activity took place.

Some people are troubled by what seems like a contradiction with respect to Jerusalem. And I do feel like I need to answer this slanderous charge against the Bible. These unbelievers point out first that Joshua killed the king of Jerusalem in chapter 10. So why is there a king around right now? Second, they point out that *Judah* tried to dislodge the Jebusites from Jerusalem in chapter 15:63, but were unsuccessful. They mistakenly think that this means that Jerusalem was supposed to be part of Judah in that chapter. Yet *this* chapter clearly places Jerusalem within the borders of Benjamin. They claim that these are blatant contradictions. But if you examine the text of each passage closely, it's actually a fairly simple explanation.

First, in chapter 10, Joshua was fighting the armies of five kings *in the open field*. There is no evidence whatsoever that he was fighting against the city of Jerusalem itself. So there is no contradiction. The king of Jerusalem had taken his armies *to* Israel. And yes, the king of Jerusalem was executed, but the Jebusites simply put another relative on the throne after his death. Don't be too quick to accept the supposed contradictions that unbelievers' commentaries claim.

Second, it makes sense that *Judah* would try to fight against Jerusalem in chapter 15 *because the walls of that city were right on Judah's borders*, and to fail to dislodge them could pose a constant threat to Judah. Benjamin wasn't doing its job, so Judah tried to fight against Jerusalem. Some conservative commentators try to reconcile this by saying that perhaps the *fortress* of Jerusalem was within Judah and the city proper was within Benjamin, but there is no need to say that. Judah's fighting against Jerusalem no more proves that Jerusalem was within Judah than other tribes helping to conquer areas outside their borders shows that they expanded their borders. They didn't; they were just helping out. Judah had a vested interest in fighting since Jerusalem posed a constant threat right on their border. The Jebusites would be traveling right through Judah and Benjamin. Of course, the text says that Judah was unsuccessful in conquering the city.

³ The Lexham Bible Dictionary states, "The Old Testament mentions Bethel (formerly named Luz; Gen 28:19; 35:6) more than any other site except Jerusalem..." Maura Sala, "Bethel North of Jerusalem," in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

In our chapter, it clearly says that the city as a whole was the *inheritance* of Benjamin, and thus the city as a whole was *within* Benjamin, not just the walls of the city.⁴ As far as I'm concerned, verse 28 settles the question. Jerusalem was a Benjamite city and was *their* inheritance. But they were derelict in their duty of conquering it.

Interestingly, in Judges 1:8, Judah is pretty upset that Benjamin still hasn't conquered the city, so *Judah* once again fights against Jerusalem - this time successfully. Judah conquers Jerusalem and sets fire to the city. *But Judah was doing that in order to protect their own turf.*

So Jerusalem was conquered in Judges 1:8, but here is another black eye to Benjamin. As it turns out, Benjamin was so lax that even though the city had already been conquered by its neighbor, Judah, the Benjamites failed to keep the city and Jebusites once again occupied it. If we Christians don't fill the gap of the cities, the pagans will. Ours is not the first generation to be so lazy that we allow the enemy to reoccupy territory that was once claimed for Christ. I praise the Lord that Christians are once again getting involved in Douglas County politics and in Nebraska state politics. Praise God! I am praying that the church of Jesus Christ across this nation would once again wake up to its missed opportunities and begin to be salt and light.

But let me end by reiterating some of the applications we have already made on this passage. I won't repeat *all* the applications, but let me remind you of eleven of the most important ones:

1. First, the fact that God has given you a small inheritance does not mean that you cannot play a critical role in God's kingdom. You can. Any time that Benjamin had faith in God, it accomplished great things despite its smallness.
2. Second, trust that God's sovereign distributions are for your good. There is no such thing as bad luck, chance, or anything else being outside of God's control. We can trust Him. God is good; always good. And He is sovereign in His good distributions.
3. Third, we should not play favorites with our children, like Jacob did. God doesn't play favorites.
4. Fourth, contrary to what charismatics falsely teach, we saw that true prophecy has always been 100% without error. It was always moved 100% by the Holy Spirit. Thus prophets often revealed embarrassing and sometimes painful things about themselves through prophecy. Praise God! And by the way, the Bible predicted that prophecy would end in AD 70.

⁴ Waltke says, "Though Joshua had killed the king of Jerusalem (10:1, 22-27), the Judeans could not dislodge the Jebusites from Jerusalem. In fact, however, the northern boundary of Judah (15:8) ran along the southern slope of Jebus (ancient Jerusalem) and so did not include the city itself which belonged to Benjamin (see 18:16, 28; Jdg. 1:21)." Bruce K. Waltke, "Joshua," in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson et al., 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 253.

5. Fifth, you are not chained by your ancestor's poor decisions. You can break out of that pattern like the later Benjamites did.
6. Sixth, God limited statism through borders and by giving property ownership to individuals, not the state. Owning your own land without government interference is a worthy goal - a goal that the EPIC tax could at least help us with.
7. Seventh, understanding the differences between self-government, family government, church government, and civil government is critical to liberty. God puts most responsibilities upon the individual, the next most upon the family, and far less upon the church, and (believe it or not) the least responsibilities are given to the civil government. America has completely reversed that order. Anyway, we saw that both physical and jurisdictional boundaries can help to protect everyone's liberties.
8. Eighth, we looked at how geography can influence families. The rough and tough geography that Benjamin occupied forced the people themselves to be much more rough and tough. But there are so many other strategic purposes God had for placing them exactly where they were. Don't get frustrated with God when he gives you difficulties. Ask God to help you thrive *despite* your obstacles.
9. Ninth, we can recognize that not everyone was made for cities and not everyone was made for the farms. We need to value both and not make people feel bad when they gravitate more to the one rather than to the other. Farm and city need each other. Who is the farm going to sell to if there is no city? We need each other. Both have value.
10. Tenth, failure to take on our responsibilities (like Benjamin's failure to conquer Jerusalem) can have long-term consequences in our lives. Seek to be the most responsible steward of what God has given you that you can be. Be salt and light where God has placed you.
11. Eleventh, God forced the clergy to be near the people so that they would mix it up with the people and the people with them. Whether you realize it or not, you need the church body and you need the church leadership. This is why we elders try to mentor and shepherd all the families during the week. Many of the Levites provided that role.

So let's thank God for this chapter and the lessons it teaches. Amen.