

Joshua 17 & 20. "Really trusting God"**Introduction**

We are currently looking at the spiritual lessons that we can learn from some chapters in Joshua that would otherwise be quite boring. These are chapters 13-22.

As I said two weeks ago the dividing up of the land of Canaan as an inheritance was not boring to the people at that time. In the same way, our inheritance in Jesus Christ is not a boring subject either. We dealt with that two weeks ago and discovered that our inheritance in Jesus Christ had 3 main ingredients.

1. It is an inheritance that is incorruptible – 1 Peter 1: v. 4.

This means that nothing can destroy it. It is reserved in heaven for us.

You can lose everything in this world, but you can't lose your inheritance from Jesus Christ.

2. It is undefiled – v. 4.

This means that it cannot be stained or cheapened in any way. It is perfect in every way. It will be the very best present that you could ever receive.

3. It does not fade away – v. 4

This means it will never grow old, because it is eternal, it can't wear out and it will never disappoint us.

However it is the spiritual lessons from chapters 17 and 20 that we are concerned about today.

We will concern ourselves with two spiritual lessons today. The first one is contained in the land given to Ephraim and Manasseh. This is mainly chapter 17.

Read Joshua 17: v. 1-18. (N.K.J.)

There was also a lot for the tribe of Manasseh, for he *was* the firstborn of Joseph: *namely* for Machir the firstborn of Manasseh, the father of Gilead, because he was a man of war; therefore he was given Gilead and Bashan. ² And there was *a lot* for the rest of the children of Manasseh according to their families: for the children of Abiezer, the children of Helek, the children of Asriel, the children of Shechem, the children of Hopher, and the children of Shemida; these *were* the male children of Manasseh the son of Joseph according to their families. ³ But Zelophehad the son of Hopher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, had no sons, but only daughters. And these *are* the names of his daughters: Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. ⁴ And they came near before Eleazar the priest, before Joshua the son of Nun, and before the rulers, saying, "The LORD commanded Moses to give us an inheritance among our brothers." Therefore, according to the commandment of the LORD, he gave them an inheritance among their father's brothers. ⁵ Ten shares fell to Manasseh, besides the land of Gilead and Bashan, which *were* on the other side of the Jordan, ⁶ because the daughters of Manasseh received an inheritance among his sons; and the rest of Manasseh's sons had the land of Gilead. ⁷ And the territory of Manasseh was from Asher to Michmethath, that *lies* east of Shechem; and the border went along south to the inhabitants of En Tappuah. ⁸ Manasseh had the land of Tappuah, but Tappuah on the border of Manasseh *belonged* to the children of Ephraim. ⁹ And the border descended to the Brook Kanah, southward to the brook. These cities of Ephraim *are* among the cities of Manasseh. The border of Manasseh *was* on the north side of the brook; and it ended at the

sea. ¹⁰ Southward *it was* Ephraim's, northward *it was* Manasseh's, and the sea was its border. Manasseh's territory was adjoining Asher on the north and Issachar on the east. ¹¹ And in Issachar and in Asher, Manasseh had Beth Shean and its towns, Ibleam and its towns, the inhabitants of Dor and its towns, the inhabitants of En Dor and its towns, the inhabitants of Taanach and its towns, and the inhabitants of Megiddo and its towns—three hilly regions. ¹² Yet the children of Manasseh could not drive out *the inhabitants of* those cities, but the Canaanites were determined to dwell in that land. ¹³ And it happened, when the children of Israel grew strong, that they put the Canaanites to forced labor, but did not utterly drive them out. ¹⁴ Then the children of Joseph spoke to Joshua, saying, "Why have you given us *only* one lot and one share to inherit, since we *are* a great people, inasmuch as the LORD has blessed us until now?" ¹⁵ So Joshua answered them, "If you *are* a great people, *then* go up to the forest *country* and clear a place for yourself there in the land of the Perizzites and the giants, since the mountains of Ephraim are too confined for you." ¹⁶ But the children of Joseph said, "The mountain country is not enough for us; and all the Canaanites who dwell in the land of the valley have chariots of iron, *both those who are* of Beth Shean and its towns and *those who are* of the Valley of Jezreel." ¹⁷ And Joshua spoke to the house of Joseph—to Ephraim and Manasseh—saying, "You *are* a great people and have great power; you shall not have *only* one lot, ¹⁸ but the mountain country shall be yours. Although it *is* wooded, you shall cut it down, and its farthest extent shall be yours; for you shall drive out the Canaanites, though they have iron chariots *and are* strong."

Joshua had a problem with Ephraim and Manasseh. These were the children of Joseph.

Let us turn to Genesis 41: v. 50-52

⁵¹ Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: "For God has made me forget all my toil and all my father's house." ⁵² And the name of the second he called Ephraim: "For God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction."

What was the problem that Joshua had with these two tribes?

Please note Joshua 17: v. 14-18 as we discover the problem.

The problem was that they complained to Joshua that they had not been given enough land to live in. Joshua was from the tribe of Ephraim (Numbers 13:8) and you would expect him to favor these tribes.

These tribes did have a point because they had increased in number. If we compare the statistics given in Numbers chapter 1: v. 32-35 and Numbers 26 v. 34 and 37 we learn that the descendants of Joseph had increased from 72,700 to 85,200, which was an increase of 12, 500 people. That would be the population of a medium size town in the U.K.

In v. 14 of chapter 17 we read these words.

¹⁴ Then the children of Joseph spoke to Joshua, saying, "Why have you given us *only* one lot and one share to inherit, since we *are* a great people, inasmuch as the LORD has blessed us until now?"

The children of Joseph said to Joshua that they were a "Great People" and that God had blessed them with more families.

Joshua challenged them in v. 15

¹⁵ So Joshua answered them, "If you *are* a great people, *then* go up to the forest *country* and clear a place for yourself there in the land of the Perizzites and the giants, since the mountains of Ephraim are too confined for you."

In other words Joshua said to them “You call yourself great, prove it by defeating the giants and clearing the forest area.”

Although the children of Joseph complained again concerning the challenge of defeating a strong enemy, nevertheless, Joshua decided to stick to his original plan, but he did allow them to have additional land which was a large forest area, as far as it went.

It is also worth noting that this tribe was constantly being critical, and were a proud people.

They not only created problems for Joshua, but also for Gideon. (Read Judges 8: v. 1-3)

Now the men of Ephraim said to him, “Why have you done this to us by not calling us when you went to fight with the Midianites?” And they reprimanded him sharply. ² So he said to them, “What have I done now in comparison with you? Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer? ³ God has delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb. And what was I able to do in comparison with you?” Then their anger toward him subsided when he said that.

They also created problems for Jephthah. (Read Judges 12: v. 1-7.)

Then the men of Ephraim gathered together, crossed over toward Zaphon, and said to Jephthah, “Why did you cross over to fight against the people of Ammon, and did not call us to go with you? We will burn your house down on you with fire!” ² And Jephthah said to them, “My people and I were in a great struggle with the people of Ammon; and when I called you, you did not deliver me out of their hands. ³ So when I saw that you would not deliver me, I took my life in my hands and crossed over against the people of Ammon; and the LORD delivered them into my hand. Why then have you come up to me this day to fight against me?” ⁴ Now Jephthah gathered together all the men of Gilead and fought against Ephraim. And the men of Gilead defeated Ephraim, because they said, “You Gileadites are fugitives of Ephraim among the Ephraimites and among the Manassites.” ⁵ The Gileadites seized the fords of the Jordan before the Ephraimites arrived. And when any Ephraimite who escaped said, “Let me cross over,” the men of Gilead would say to him, “Are you an Ephraimite?” If he said, “No,” ⁶ then they would say to him, “Then say, ‘Shibboleth!’” And he would say, “Sibboleth,” for he could not pronounce it right. Then they would take him and kill him at the fords of the Jordan. There fell at that time forty-two thousand Ephraimites.

⁷ And Jephthah judged Israel six years. Then Jephthah the Gileadite died and was buried in among the cities of Gilead.

They also created problems for David.

(Read 2 Samuel 20: v. 1-5.)

And there happened to be there a rebel, whose name was Sheba the son of Bichri, a Benjamite. And he blew a trumpet, and said: “We have no share in David, Nor do we have inheritance in the son of Jesse; Every man to his tents, O Israel!” ² So every man of Israel deserted David, and followed Sheba the son of Bichri. But the men of Judah, from the Jordan as far as Jerusalem, remained loyal to their king. ³ Now David came to his house at Jerusalem. And the king took the ten women, his concubines whom he had left to keep the house, and put them in seclusion and supported them, but did not go in to them. So they were shut up to the day of their death, living in widowhood. ⁴ And the king said to Amasa, “Assemble the men of Judah for me within three days, and be present here yourself.” ⁵ So Amasa went to assemble the men of Judah. But he delayed longer than the set time which David had appointed him.

There is a surface problem with Ephraim and Manasseh not being content with God's gift of one portion of land, however there is an underlying deeper problem which is much more serious.

This deeper problem is what I want to discuss here.

The deeper problem is that this tribe had a distrust of God's adequacy. It is not that God did not know their fears. (See Deuteronomy chapter 7& 20)

The challenge for us today is do we really believe in the God of the Bible?

Do we face challenges in the Christian Life or in the life of O.I.C. based upon our own thinking or our own resources, or do we trust God based upon His thinking and His resources?

We will never really see God's power at work until we venture out and trust Him to work in His power, to accomplish the things He promises in the Bible.

Moses didn't want to trust God and rescue 2 million of God's people in Egypt. However in the end he went. What happened? He saw the power of God work mightily and the 2 million were rescued from Egypt, not just running away, they took the riches of Egypt with them.

Then Moses brought them to the Red Sea. Now the 2 million people had to trust God. They complained to Moses at the time, but later they saw the power of God open the Red Sea and they all walked through on dry ground.

Over the last 30 years in Christian ministry I have had to trust God, when I had no resources and no personal ability to do what God required. I went forward in faith, God supplied the resources and God gave me the ability to serve Him.

I have also worked with 2 Churches where, although difficult for the members to trust God themselves, they did support my leadership and as a result they were blessed corporately as a Church fellowship.

This question is;

Q. What is God challenging us to do this year?

If we can do it in our own strength with our own resources, then it is not a God project, we need to think again.

We now turn to chapter 20.

Let us read Joshua 20: v. 1-9.

The LORD also spoke to Joshua, saying, ²“Speak to the children of Israel, saying: ‘Appoint for yourselves cities of refuge, of which I spoke to you through Moses, ³that the slayer who kills a person accidentally or unintentionally may flee there; and they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood. ⁴And when he flees to one of those cities, and stands at the entrance of the gate of the city, and declares his case in the hearing of the elders of that city, they shall take him into the city as one of them, and give him a place, that he may dwell among them. ⁵Then if the avenger of blood pursues him, they shall not deliver the slayer into his hand, because he struck his neighbor unintentionally, but did not hate him beforehand. ⁶And he shall dwell in that city until he stands before the congregation for judgment, and until the death of the one who is high priest in those days. Then the slayer may return and come to his own city and his own house, to the city from which he fled.’” ⁷So they appointed Kedesh in Galilee, in the mountains of Naphtali, Shechem in the mountains of Ephraim, and Kirjath Arba (which is Hebron) in the mountains of Judah. ⁸And on the other side of the Jordan, by Jericho eastward, they assigned Bezer in the wilderness on the plain, from the tribe of Reuben, Ramoth in Gilead, from the tribe of Gad,

and Golan in Bashan, from the tribe of Manasseh. ⁹ These were the cities appointed for all the children of Israel and for the stranger who dwelt among them, that whoever killed a person accidentally might flee there, and not die by the hand of the avenger of blood until he stood before the congregation.

When the nation of Israel was still on the other side of the Jordan, God told Moses to have the people set aside special cities for the Levites (Num. 35v. 1-5) as well as 6 cities of refuge.

(Num. 35: v. 9-15) Read these verses.

⁹ Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ¹⁰ "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan, ¹¹ then you shall appoint cities to be cities of refuge for you, that the manslayer who kills any person accidentally may flee there. ¹² They shall be cities of refuge for you from the avenger, that the manslayer may not die until he stands before the congregation in judgment. ¹³ And of the cities which you give, you shall have six cities of refuge. ¹⁴ You shall appoint three cities on this side of the Jordan, and three cities you shall appoint in the land of Canaan, *which* will be cities of refuge. ¹⁵ These six cities shall be for refuge for the children of Israel, for the stranger, and for the sojourner among them, that anyone who kills a person accidentally may flee there.

Now that the tribes had received their territories, Joshua could assign these cities.

We are going to be concerned with the cities of refuge.

Before we do this we need some background information.

Even before the Law of Moses was given, God had laid down a basic rule concerning murder.

Let us read Genesis chapter 9: v. 3-6. (N.K.J.)

³ Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs. ⁴ But you shall not eat flesh with its life, *that is*, its blood. ⁵ Surely for your lifeblood I will demand *a reckoning*; from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man. From the hand of every man's brother I will require the life of man. ⁶ "Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed; For in the image of God He made man.

Later on God made a distinction between murder and manslaughter.

The 6 cities of refuge were needed because society in that day had no police force to investigate crimes. It was the responsibility of each family unit. The family units had to decide if the crime was premeditated murder or manslaughter.

Basically murder is where someone plans to kill somebody and manslaughter is where a murder takes place as a result of an accident or some other not planned violence. It can be sometimes difficult to decide between murder and manslaughter.

If a person was found guilty of manslaughter then he could take refuge in one of these special designated cities. The cities were placed so that everybody had equal access to them.

The person guilty of manslaughter was able to flee to one of these cities and they would be protected there. It was a case of giving up his freedom in order to save his or her life. It was like being in a prison except you were free to roam the city, but not go outside. These cities were very small, they would be no bigger than Tamatsukuri.

Many Bible students have seen in these cities of refuge a picture of our Salvation in Jesus Christ, to whom we flee for refuge.

Hebrews 6: v. 18 likens our salvation as fleeing for refuge.

The meanings of the names of these cities in Hebrew are interesting. If we take them in order as listed by Joshua in chapter 20:v. 7-8 we have;

1. Kadesh = Righteousness in Hebrew
2. Shechem = Shoulder in Hebrew
3. Hebron = Fellowship in Hebrew
4. Bezer = fortress or stronghold in Hebrew
5. Ramoth = heights in Hebrew
6. Golan = Exile in Hebrew.

These names can be used to describe what sinners experience when they flee by faith to Jesus.

First He gives them HIS righteousness and they can never be accused again.(Rom. 8:v. 1)

Secondly He carries them on His shoulders, like a Shepherd.

Then they enter into fellowship with Him.

He is their fortress or stronghold and they are safe.

Then they dwell in the heights of His grace, even though they are exiles, and pilgrims and strangers in this world.

The transferable principle from these cities of refuge is clear.

Unless we have fled to Jesus, aware of our guilt and sin, then there is NO SAFETY from the wrath of God to come when we die.

God has provided a way of escape through Jesus. He is the person that has taken the punishment for our sin. We are the guilty ones, but Jesus died in our place. He was our substitute sacrifice. He is the go between or intermediary between God and us.

There is no other way to secure a place of safety for us except through Jesus.

Christianity is different from all other religions. It bases its truth on the resurrection of its founder Jesus Christ. This was God in human form. He came to this earth for the sole purpose of making a way possible so that we could have a right relationship once again with our creator God.

He died a cruel death to take the punishment of our sins. He was then raised from the dead and appeared to many people, even 500 people at one time.

He now lives in Heaven. His arms are open wide for people to come to Him.

Will you come today and receive Him into your heart, to be your Lord and Savior?

Will you allow Him to come into your life, to forgive you and cleanse you and direct your life here on this earth?

Jesus is the only place of safety for your soul.

Let us pray.