

Sermon Outline

**“AND THE LORD GAVE THEM REST”:
A CHRISTIAN READING OF THE BOOK OF JOSHUA**

GOD’S GIFTS TO JUDAH

(JOSHUA 15:1-63)

I. Introduction

II. Introduction to Judah’s Inheritance from God (Joshua 15:1)

- A. The passage begins this way: “The allotment for the tribe of the people of Judah according to their clans reached southward to the boundary of Edom, to the wilderness of Zin at the farthest south.”
1. This passage is saying that Judah’s allotment of land was in the south.
 2. It extends down to the territory of Edom, which is south-east of the Dead Sea.
 3. Then it goes as far south as the wilderness of Zin (Howard Jr., *Joshua*, 334).
- B. The word “allotment” (*gorāl*) refers to the casting of lots to determine which land Judah would have.
- Again, we have a reminder that it is the Lord God himself who, through the casting of the lots, has determined the land that Judah should have.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) Where was Judah’s land? (2) To what truth does “allotment” allude?

III. Judah’s South Boundary (Joshua 15:2-4)

- A. In verses 2-4, we have a description of Judah’s southern boundary.
- B. This is an east-to-west description of the southern boundary of Judah.
- C. The boundary winds its way westward from the southern end of the Dead Sea all the way to the Mediterranean Sea. (Howard, Jr., *Joshua*, 334).

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What is featured in verses 2-4? (2) According to the text, where does Judah’s southern boundary run?

IV. Judah’s East and North Boundaries (Joshua 15:5-11)

- A. Beginning in verse 5, we come to a description of the eastern and northern boundaries of Judah.
- B. The east boundary is simple enough: It runs from the “the Salt Sea, to the mouth of the Jordan.”
- C. But when we come to the northern boundary, we find a very lengthy description which runs from verse 5 to 11.

- D. The reason for such a detailed description of the northern boundary may be partly administrative: Judah's northern boundary coincides with Benjamin's southern boundary (Hubbard, Jr., *Joshua*, 406).

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What is the east boundary? (2) What do we read from verses 5-11? (3) What could be a reason for the tremendous detail in the delineation of the northern boundary?

V. Caleb's House: Between Holy Courage and Selfish Greed (Joshua 15:13-19)

- A. At this point, we come to an episode involving the household of Caleb.
- B. In verse 31, we are reminded of the Lord's commandment to give to Caleb "a portion among the people of Judah," namely, "Kiriath-arba, that is, Hebron..."
- C. Verse 14 says that "Caleb drove out from there the three sons of Anak, Sheshai and Ahiman and Talmi, the descendants of Anak."
1. The brevity with which Caleb's battle is described may suggest the ease with which Caleb overcame Israel's enemies.
 2. Even at his old age, Caleb was a warrior.
- D. But Caleb is not yet done: "he went up from there against the inhabitants of Debir," which was formerly known as "Kiriath-sepher" (v 15).
- E. It is at this point that Caleb makes an interesting proposal: "Whoever strikes Kiriath-sepher and captures it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter as wife" (v 16).
- F. In the next line, we read "And Othniel the son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb, captured it."
—Consequently, Caleb gave his daughter Achsah to Othniel as his wife (v 17).
- G. As it turns out, Achsah herself is quite a character: "When she came to him [meaning her husband Othniel], she urged him to ask her father for a field."
- H. But apparently, not too long after that request was made, Achsah herself goes to her father and asks (demands?) him for much more than a field: "Give me a blessing. Since you have given me the land of the Negeb, give me also springs of water."
- I. She must have been very precious to Caleb because the next thing we read is that "he gave her the upper springs and the lower springs" (v 19).
- J. What are we to make of this episode? Why was it even included in the first place? There are several possible reasons.
1. It explains how the family of Caleb came into possession of their lands.
 2. It underscores the faithfulness of Caleb.
 - a. Caleb is a model Israelite.
 - b. Even in his old age, Caleb demonstrates fierce, youthful obedience to the Lord.
 3. But it also shows that not everything is well with Israel—even in the best of families.

- K. Is Achsah a heroine—or is she something else altogether?
1. One reason some may think Achsah a heroine is that she herself is zealous for the land.
—And of course, she marries the other great hero of the story, Othniel.
 2. What makes us much more hesitant about Achsah is the fact that she is *manipulative* (she urges her husband to talk to her father) and maybe even *greedy* (not satisfied with the field that her father gives her, Achsah also wants the springs of water). (See John Calvin, Trent Butler)
 3. Is Achsah a model of godly womanhood? Is she the female version of Caleb in this account? Most likely not!
 - a. It seems that she has some rather undesirable traits.
 - b. At best, Achsah is a petulant child; the little princess that never grew up.
 - c. At worst, she exemplifies the worst of typical female sins: Manipulativeness, covetousness, and disrespectfulness.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What are some possible reasons for the inclusion of the episode of Caleb’s household? (2) What should we make of Achsah’s character?

VI. The Inheritances of the Clans of Judah (Joshua 15:20-62)

- A. And then beginning in verse 20 going all the way to verse 60, we come to a listing of the territories of each of the clans of Judah.
- B. We will not go into detail here. But we will just note the introduction to this section: “This is the inheritance of the tribe of the people of Judah according to their clans” (v 20).
- C. And as we go down this list, we see that it is divided into four sections.
 1. The clans of the *far south*. (vv 21-32)
 2. The clans of the *lowland* (vv 33-47)
 3. The clans of the *hill country* (vv 48-60)
 4. The territories of the clans in the *wilderness* (vv 61-62).

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What are the four sections of Judah’s inheritance?

VII. The Jebusites (Joshua 15:63)

- A. Then we come to verse 63, which tells us that not everything is okay: “But the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the people of Judah could not drive out, so the Jebusites dwell with the people of Judah at Jerusalem to this day.”
- B. There are remnants of enemy nations still in the land.
- C. We see this pattern in later passages.
 1. Ephraim: “However, they did not drive out the Canaanites who lived in Gezer, so the Canaanites have lived in the midst of Ephraim to this day but have been made to do forced labor” (16:10).

2. Manasseh: “Yet the people of Manasseh could not take possession of those cities, but the Canaanites persisted in dwelling in that land” (17:12).
- D. These verses tell us that the victory is not yet complete.
—Even if Israel is the dominant power in the land, it doesn’t mean that they are completely in control.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What does v 63 tell us about the extent of Judah’s control over the land? (2) How well do Ephraim and Manasseh do in taking their land?

VIII. Judah: Greatness and Weakness

- A. We can now appreciate what we have read concerning the tribe of Judah.
- B. Consider Judah’s greatness
1. The tremendous size of Judah’s inheritance and the amount of detail devoted to describing it points to Judah’s increasing importance in Israel (Hubbard Jr., *Joshua*, 409).
 - a. Israel’s great king David will come from Judah.
 - b. The great temple of the Lord will also be in Judah.
 2. Judah’s greatness is the fulfilment of the prophecy that Jacob gave concerning his sons in Genesis 49.
 - a. Genesis 49:8: Judah will be first among equals.

*‘Judah, your brothers shall praise you;
your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies;
your father’s sons shall bow down before you.*
 - b. Genesis 49:10: Judah will be the seat of royalty.

*The scepter shall not depart from Judah,
nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet,
until tribute comes to him;
and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.*
 3. When we come to this very long list of all the lands that are absorbed into Judah, we are seeing something of the future to come.
 - a. We would not have known this of course if all we did was focus on the names of towns.
 - b. When we read this passage in light of the larger canon of Scripture, we begin to see things that we otherwise would not see.
 - c. Now that we know the direction God is leading Judah, this entire list makes sense. It calls attention to Judah’s greatness and strength. It calls our attention to Judah’s primacy amongst the tribes of Israel.

C. Consider the weakness of Judah.

1. Lest we are tempted to think too highly of Judah, there are various verses that make us hesitant from heaping too much praise on Judah too quickly.
 - a. Caleb's daughter Achsah
 - b. The remnants of the Jebusites in Judah's realm
2. Judah has its thorn in the flesh. The Sabbath has not yet come. Judah has remaining sin and enemies it needs to address.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What does Jacob prophesy concerning Judah in Genesis 49? (2) How does Jacob's prophecy shed light on the prominence and greatness of Judah's inheritance? (3) What is Jacob's remaining weakness?

IX. Judah's Royal Scepter, Judah's Savior Son

The story of Judah points us to the one in whom Judah's royalty and salvation lies: Jesus Christ, Judah's greatest Son. Scripture calls Jesus the Lion of the tribe of Judah (Rev 5:5). He is Judah's great Leader and Champion. By his perfect obedience to the Father, his death on the cross, his resurrection from the dead, and his ascension into heaven, King Jesus has overcome Judah's greatest enemies—their own sin and all the hosts of evil that oppose Judah. But Jesus exerts this victorious rule over the rest of his people as well. When we trust in him, the Lord Jesus enables us to overcome remaining sin in our lives as well. So yet again, Scripture calls us to put our hope not in ourselves but in someone else. In the end, we realize that God's greatest gift to Judah and to us is not land but the Savior. Salvation rests in Jesus Christ alone.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What title does Revelation 5 give to the Lord Jesus? (2) Explain how Jesus becomes Judah's royalty and redemption. (3) How does Jesus exercise his rule over us? What benefits do we receive from living under his rule?