

## *Promised Land 1 Study and Discussion Questions*

### *Lesson Three: Division of the Land - Joshua 13 – 24*

#### Joshua 13

- 1) Israel had completed major military campaigns victoriously in the Promised Land. According to Joshua 13:1 and 13:6b-7, what two objectives still lay before them? **13:1 says there were still “very large areas of land to be taken over” and 13:6b-7 indicates that the land still had to be allocated (divided) among the tribes.**
- 2) Among the description of the land deeded to the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half the tribe of Manasseh east of the Jordan in Joshua 13, Joshua twice stated that another tribe, Levi, also did not receive a land inheritance within Canaan’s borders. According to Joshua 13:14, 33; 18:7, and Numbers 18, why didn’t they? **According to Numbers 18, the Levites did not need to work land for their main source of food and income. Their God-assigned work was in the Tabernacle (later, the Temple), and for this work they were compensated with the offerings the Israelites brought as sacrifices. This included anything “devoted” to the Lord: all the oil, wine, and grain offered as “firstfruits” to the Lord, as well as the Israelites’ tithes. Joshua 13:14 also says that the food offerings made to the Lord (“by fire”) were the Levites’ inheritance. Joshua 13:33 indicates that the Lord Himself was their inheritance.**
- 3) What personal obstacle did Joshua face (13:1) and what assurance did he receive that this problem was not a problem for God (13:6)? What seemingly impossible task will you ask God to handle for you? **13:1 says Joshua was well advanced in years, but in 13:6, God assured him that He Himself would drive out the remaining inhabitants of the land. Personal sharing**

#### Joshua 14 – 19

- 4) Joshua 14-19 records the tracts of land deeded to the remaining nine-and-a-half tribes west of the Jordan in Canaan. Based on any knowledge you have about the first five books of the Bible, why were the recording of these deeds and the receiving of the land causes for great rejoicing in Israel? **Hundreds of years earlier, God had promised the Patriarchs that their descendants would possess the land of Canaan as a permanent inheritance. Although that did not occur in the Patriarchs’ lifetimes, they believed God would be faithful to His promise and were even buried in Canaan as a statement of their faith. Since their time, many generations of Israelites, over a 430-year period, had spent their lives enslaved in Egypt. Yet another generation had wandered in the desert. All of these people had anticipated the fulfillment of God’s promise. After all these years, for each family to finally receive an allotted inheritance was cause for great rejoicing!**
- 5) Read Numbers 14:6-25, and then skim Numbers 13 and 14:26-38 for information about Caleb. According to Numbers 14:30 and Joshua 14:10-11, what promise did God make and fulfill, and how did He bless Caleb even beyond what He had promised? **Caleb and Joshua were two of the twelve spies sent into Canaan by Moses to explore the land forty-five years (Joshua 14:10) earlier. Ten of the twelve spies doubted God could overthrow the intimidating inhabitants of the land. The Israelites believed this bad report and refused to enter Canaan. God punished them, causing all that generation to wander and die in the desert over a forty-year period. However, because Joshua and Caleb had trusted God, He promised that they alone would live to enter the Promised Land. At 85 years old, Caleb said that God had not only kept His promise to bring him into the land of Canaan, but He had also given him such good health that he was still as strong as he had been forty-five years earlier (Joshua 14:10-11)!**

- 6) Compare Caleb's courageous expansion of his territory (Joshua 15:13-19) to Ephraim and Manasseh's complaint that they were unable to take all their land (Joshua 17:14-18) and summarize Joshua's advice (Joshua 17:18b). Which person, who depends on you for advice, guidance, or leadership, could you similarly encourage? **While Caleb bravely expanded his territory beyond Hebron to Debir and the Negev, Ephraim and Manasseh complained that they did not have enough land because what they were given was being held by Canaanites with iron chariots. Joshua told them they needed to do the work of clearing the forested land they were given and of driving the Canaanites out from the plains. They *could do it*, he said. When difficult challenges come our way, it is always encouraging to have someone we respect say, "You can do it!" Personal sharing**
- 7) Keeping in mind what you learned about the attitude of the tribes of Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh) in question 6, read Joshua 15:63, 16:10, 17:12-13.
- To what danger was war-weary Israel succumbing and with what likely result? (See Joshua 23:12-13.) **It seems that the war-weary Israelites became lazy in their attitude toward driving out the Canaanites and reasoned that they could, instead, use them for slave labor. They started well but did not complete their God-given assignment. At the end of his life, Joshua warned them (just as Moses had) that the remaining Canaanites would eventually ensnare them (Joshua 23).**
  - Is there a stronghold of sin that you have dismissed as too difficult to dislodge from your life or not worth the effort? What does Philippians 1:6 say to encourage you? **Personal sharing**

#### Joshua 20 – 22

- 8) According to Joshua 20, what was the purpose of having "cities of refuge" (see also Numbers 35:9-16, 19)? **The Israelites were to select and designate six Cities of Refuge (three on each side of the Jordan) "so that anyone who kills a person accidentally and unintentionally may flee there and find protection from the avenger of blood." People accused of murder could live safely in these cities while awaiting trial.**
- 9) The allocation of 48 towns for the Levites (Joshua 21) completes the division of the land among the tribes. Read the summary in Joshua 21:43-45, along with Joshua 23:14, and tell what you learn about the Lord God from these verses. With regard to what specific issue does this encourage you? **God is faithful to do all He promises. Personal sharing**
- 10) Read the drama in Joshua 22. What fundamental concern was so great that it almost caused a civil war between the eastern and western tribes? **After commending the eastern tribes for keeping their commitment to settle the western tribes in their land and exhorting them to keep the Law of Moses (to love God, walk in His ways, obey His commands, hold fast to Him, and serve Him wholeheartedly), Joshua freed them to return to their land and families east of the Jordan. Shortly after their return, the western tribes discovered that they had built an imposing altar on the border between them (the Jordan). The eastern tribes had built it as a reminder of their right to worship at the Lord's altar (which was west of the Jordan), but the western tribes assumed it was built as a *second* altar for sacrifices, which the Law of Moses forbade. The western tribes rallied for civil war and confronted the eastern tribes with their "sin," reminding them that it would bring cursing on *all* of Israel. The eastern tribes assured them that they fully intended to remain loyal to the Lord and explained their reasoning: They had built the altar as a sign to future generations that, despite the geographical division created by the Jordan, they were fully part of the inheritance of the Lord and had the right to worship at the *true* (and only legal) altar in the west. This news brought great relief and rejoicing among the western tribes. They praised God and ended any discussion of civil war. Their fundamental concern had been that if the eastern tribes had broken the Law of Moses, all the tribes would have suffered.**

### Joshua 23 – 24

- 11) List the instructions and warnings Joshua gave Israel at the end of his life (chapter 23). Joshua told Israel to expect God to drive out the remaining inhabitants and take possession of it (23:5); to be very strong and careful to obey the law completely (23:6), to not associate with the nations that remain, flirt with or serve their gods (23:7) to hold fast to the Lord (23:8), and to be careful to love the Lord (23:11). He warned that they turned from God and allied with the remaining inhabitants, God would no longer drive them out but would allow them to be snares until they perished from the good land (23:12-13). He also warned that if they served other gods, God's threatened curses would surely fall on them (23:15-16).
- 12) According to Joshua 24, Joshua summoned the Israelites to renew their covenant agreement with God. What was the significance of choosing Shechem as the site for the ceremony (see Genesis 12:6-7)? According to Joshua 24:32, what other significant event took place at Shechem (presumably during Joshua's lifetime)? Genesis 12:6 says that Abraham was in Shechem when he first received the promise that he would inherit Canaan. Shechem was also the site where Joseph's bones were buried (in accordance with Joseph's deathbed request, the Israelites had taken his bones with them when they left Egypt).
- 13) According to Joshua 24, what choice did Israel face (include verse numbers)? Specifically, how does this same choice challenge your life today? According to Joshua 24:15, Joshua challenged the Israelites to make a serious decision about whether or not they would follow the Lord God. The alternative was to follow the false gods their forefathers (Abraham's father Terah) had worshipped "beyond the river" (Euphrates) or the gods of the local residents (the Amorites), in whose land they were living. Personal sharing

### Joshua 24

- 14) Which phrase in Joshua 24:31 explains Israel's faithfulness during the years Joshua's contemporaries remained alive? They "had experienced [known] everything the Lord had done for Israel." They had personally witnessed God miraculously holding back the waters of the Jordan and they had witnessed Him fighting on their behalf.
- 15) What have you personally witnessed the Lord do for you that you need to share with your spiritual and physical descendants? Personal sharing