

## ~ Faith Yields Its Reward ~

**Text:** Joshua 15

**Theme:** Having entered the land of fight and faith, Israel conquered their enemies with God's help, and now it was time to receive the reward for their faithful service. Faithful service never goes unseen or unrewarded. God always rewards his faithful servants.

**Intro:**

1. In chapter 14 we looked at the faithfulness of Caleb as he wholly followed the Lord his God.
  - a. Caleb continued to trust God for victories even in the latter years of his life.
  - b. Caleb wasn't content to rest in the land they had already taken but was ready and willing to go up and take the mountain where the giants dwelt because he trusted that God would be with him.
2. Joshua chapter 15 records the boundaries, cities, and inheritance of the tribe of Judah, restating the special inheritance given to Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and demonstrating the fulfilment of God's promises concerning the land
3. The chapter naturally divides into three sections, with the middle one being the shortest.
  - I. Judah's Inherited Land (Vs 1-12)
  - II. Caleb's Inherited Land (Vs 13-19)
  - III. Judah's Inherited Cities (Vs 20-61)

Verses 1-12 detail the borders and full scope of the land given to the tribe of Judah and verse 20-61 detail the specific cities within their inheritance which were given to them to possess.

Note: Not all of this land remained in their possession. Some of this land ended up falling to other tribes, but the greater part remained in their possession.

**Main:**

- I. **Judah's Inherited Land (Vs 1-12)**
  - A. The need for the division of the land
    1. The land on the east side of the Jordan river needed to be divided between the 9 and one-half tribes.
      - a. The tribes of Ruben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh had already been given their possession on the east side of the Jordan river, but the other tribes awaited their possession within the boundaries of the promised land.

- i. “In chapters 15 to 19 we have the account of the division of the land west of the Jordan among the nine and one-half tribes that had not chosen to remain in the country of Bashan and the land of Gilead on the east side of the river, as had the two and one-half tribes, who found there such fine accommodation for pasturing their great herds of cattle. They preferred to settle down in the countries taken from Og, king of Bashan, and Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Moses gave them that permission, as we have seen, providing their warriors went into the land to help their brethren against the Canaanites.”<sup>1</sup>
  - ii. “Judah and Joseph were the two sons of Jacob on whom Reuben’s forfeited birth-right devolved. Judah had the dominion entailed on him, and Joseph the double portion, and therefore these two tribes were first seated, Judah in the southern part of the land of Canaan and Joseph in the northern part.”<sup>2</sup>
  - b. These two tribes were given the largest portions of the land, and the other tribes were allotted land according to the number of people in the tribe.
    - i. **Numbers 33:54** *“And ye shall divide the land by lot for an inheritance among your families: and to the more ye shall give the more inheritance, and to the fewer ye shall give the less inheritance: every man’s inheritance shall be in the place where his lot falleth; according to the tribes of your fathers ye shall inherit.”*
- B. The details of the division of the land
- 1. The south border (Vs 2 - 4)
    - a. Tracing the southern border in detail it went as follows:
      - i. From the bottom edge of the **Dead Sea**, it ran south-west towards the Wilderness of Zin before turning full west toward the Mediterranean Sea. On its way to the Mediterranean, it ran from the Dead Sea to Maaleh-**acrabbim**, and passed along the **Wilderness of Zin**, from there to **Kadesh-Barnea** and along to Hezron.
      - ii. From there it continued west to Adar and then around the border of Karkaa, going on from there toward **Azmon** and

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<sup>1</sup> H. A. Ironside, [Addresses on the Book of Joshua](#). (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1950), 117.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew Henry, [Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume](#) (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 315–316.

- then out to the **River of Egypt**, which is not the Nile river but a brook that serves as a natural border between the Negev of Israel and the Sinai Peninsula, and it followed this brook up to the Mediterranean Sea.
- b. “In summary the south border ran from the bottom of the Dead Sea down along the Wilderness of Zin including Kadesh-Barnea then westward to the “river of Egypt” (which is not the Nile River, but a stream or wadi on the northeast corner of the Sinia Peninsula) then northwest to the Mediterranean Sea.”<sup>3</sup>
2. The east border (Vs 5a)
    - a. This border is simply the Dead Sea, or Salt Sea as it was known
      - i. The Dead Sea formed a natural boundary on the east side of the land inherited by Judah.
      - ii. The Dead Sea is extremely salty but Ezekiel 47:8-10 prophesy that God will heal the Dead Sea during the millennium and it will be filled with so many fish that it will become a popular fishing spot. That is a huge contrast to the Dead Sea today, which is so salty that, if you could manage to swallow a cup of its water, it would kill you.
  3. The north border (Vs 5b – 11)
    - a. The northern border is traced westward from the place where the Jordan River empties out into the top of the Dead Sea.
      - i. From the top of the Dead Sea the border ran west to **Beth-hogla** and from there it ran north of **Beth-arabah** up to the stone of Bohan, who was a prominent Rubenite and was likely buried there as a memorial.
      - ii. From there it ran across to **Debir** which is above the valley of Achor. Then proceeding toward the waters of En-shemesh it came to **En-rogel**. Then going from En-rogel it passed by Jerusalem and then to the fountain of Nephtoah and out to the cities of **Mount Ephron**.
      - iii. The border then ran across to **Kirjath-jearim** and to mount Seir. From there it ran alongside mount Jearim and went down to **Beth-shemesh** and up to **Timnah**.
      - iv. From Timnah it passed beside Ekron and on to **Shikkeron**, passing from there to mount Baalah and went up to **Jabneel**, and from there running northwest to the Mediterranean Sea.
    - b. “In summary, the sectional or northern border was a zig-zag line from the southern tip of the Jordan (northern edge of the Dead

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<sup>3</sup> John G Butler, 2010; Analytical Bible Expositor Volume 3, Joshua to Ruth; Page 130

Sea) to Jerusalem then to such better-known cities of Kirjath-jearim and Timnah and Jabneel to the Mediterranean.”<sup>4</sup>

4. The west border (Vs 12)
  - a. The west border is also easy to explain as it is the Mediterranean Sea.

## II. Caleb’s Inherited Land (Vs 13-19)

### A. Caleb’s conquest of Hebron (Vs 13-14)

1. In the previous chapter we noted that Caleb requested the mountain known as Kirjath-Arba for his inheritance.
  - a. This place was named after a prominent giant known as Arba.
    - i. Arba was likely the man who built the city or at least established it as a stronghold in the region and so it was named after him.
    - ii. When Caleb took the city of Arba, the man for whom it was named was no longer there, but his grandsons were.
    - iii. We are told that Arba was the father of Anak and that the three giants driven out of Arba were the sons of Anak, making them the grandsons of Arba.
  - b. Caleb had clearly made good on his promise to Joshua that he would drive out the giants in this mountain.
    - i. Caleb had said, in the previous chapter, that he would drive out the giants and that is what he did. “Caleb was more than talk, he was also walk, for he drove out the three sons of Anak. Some folks like to talk about their strength and robustness as Caleb did, but when it comes time to produce, they fail miserably, for they are only talk. Caleb was a different sort. He walked his talk.”<sup>5</sup>
    - ii. Example: Have you ever heard a sports team talking themselves up before a match? They say things like, “We’re gonna get out there and wipe the floor with them, we’ll teach them what a real team can do!” And a few hours later they do a post-match interview where they come up with a half-dozen excuses why the other team turned them into dessert by absolutely creaming them. We all look at that and laugh and say, “What a load of hot air all that pre-match bluster was...”
  - c. But how many Christian hold to sound scriptural standards in principle, but in practice they are easy persuaded to cave on those principles?

<sup>4</sup> John G Butler, 2010; Analytical Bible Expositor Volume 3, Joshua to Ruth; Page 131

<sup>5</sup> John G Butler, 2010; Analytical Bible Expositor Volume 3, Joshua to Ruth; Page 132

- i. How many Christians would say that wine is a mocker and strong drink is raging and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise, but then they go and hang out with their work buddies at the local café where they are all drinking alcohol.
  - ii. How many Christians will emphasize how much they love the godly hymns but at home they listen to the rock n roll junk of the world or to the modern CCM which imitates the rock n roll of the world?
  - iii. How many Christians will tell you that they hate the decline in dress standards in the world and the sexual immorality that goes hand in hand with that and yet, behind closed doors at home, the movies they watch would tell you that their hearts aren't so opposed to those things as they might lead others to believe?
  - iv. We must walk the talk or else our talk is nothing but pre-match bluster. And when the match is over, at the end of the day, the truth is determined by what you did not what you said.
- B. Caleb's conquest of Debir (Vs 15-19)
1. Caleb didn't stop with the giants in the mountain. He went on to claim more land for Israel.
    - a. Caleb was a man who was not content to sit back in his lounge chair while every one else walked the walk of faith.
      - i. "We are too apt to take the line of least resistance, to be content with that which seems the easiest thing instead of valiantly going on in faith to lay hold of the best that God has for us, no matter what difficulties may seem to make it impossible for us to overcome the foe and to enter into and enjoy our allotted portion."<sup>6</sup>
      - ii. Faithfulness like Caleb's is rewarded. Be not weary in well-doing.
    - b. Debir was in the same area as Hebron but in the south-west which encouraged Caleb to take it as well. As incentive to others, Caleb promised his daughter Achsah as a wife to whoever could conquer Debir.
      - i. Caleb's brother's son, Othniel, took the city and was given Achsah as his wife. Othniel became the first of the judges of Israel as seen in Judges chapter 3.
      - ii. **Judges 3:9-10a** *"And when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer to the*

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<sup>6</sup> H. A. Ironside, [Addresses on the Book of Joshua](#). (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1950), 116.

*children of Israel, who delivered them, even Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. And the Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he judged Israel, and went out to war:"*

- iii. "This Othniel, who thus signalized himself when he was young, had long after, in his advanced years, the honour to be both a deliverer and a judge in Israel, the first single person that presided in their affairs after Joshua's death. It is good for those who are setting out in the world to begin betimes with that which is great and good, that, excelling in service when they are young, they may excel in honour when they grow old."<sup>7</sup>
- c. The faith of Caleb inspired others. Like Othniel, to take steps of faith in accomplishing the work of God.
- 2. Caleb's daughter took after her father in the desire to enter into all the blessings God had for them in their inheritance.
  - a. Like Caleb had requested the mountain of the giants for his possession, so his daughter had wisdom to request springs of water for her possession.
    - i. At the time when Caleb fulfilled his promise to give Achsah to Othniel as his wife, Achsah recognised an opportunity to request a field with water from her father. Not only did Caleb give her one field, but rather two fields with water, one on the north side and one on the south side of their allotment.
    - ii. Faith always seeks the greater blessing. Faith always desires to enter into all the blessings God has for us in our inheritance in Christ.
    - iii. Faith, then, is what compels us to walk in the Spirit and be filled with the Spirit so we can enjoy all the blessings of being led by and blessed by the Holy Spirit.

### III. Judah's Inhabited Cities (Vs 20-61)

- A. The cities of inherited blessing
  - 1. Each of the cities listed in the following verses are a testament to God's faithfulness in bringing Israel into possession of the land he had promised them.
    - a. When God promises the Christian an inheritance in heaven as a reward for faithful service, you can be sure that you will possess that inheritance one day. It isn't a vague hope but a guarantee.

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<sup>7</sup> Matthew Henry, [Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume](#) (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 316.

- b. The cities are stated to be “according to their families” indicating that, since Israel inhabited these cities, they came to be known by the families that lived there.
2. Let’s quickly break down the list of cities and their divisions within the chapter.
  - a. Note: In Vs 20-32 you will count thirty-eight different cities or villages here which has led some to be confused when it comes to verse 32 which says, “all the cities are twenty and nine, with their villages.”
    - i. What the verse is actually saying is, there were twenty-nine cities and another nine villages attached to some of those cities which were large enough to be named also.
    - ii. There are no errors in the Bible and even when we think we have found an error it is usually explainable once compared with the rest of scripture. If no explanation can be found you should give God the benefit of the doubt and assume that there is a piece of information missing from the puzzle and that God is always right.
  - b. Vs 33-47 - These cities were in the fertile plains region and are divided into 4 groups:
    - i. The 14 cities of verses 33-36
    - ii. The 16 cities of verses 37-41
    - iii. The 9 cities of verses 42-44
    - iv. The Philistine cities of verses 45-47 which are not given a specific number.  
Many of these cities remained inhabited by the Philistines a quite some time.
  - c. Vs 48-60 - These were cities of the hill country and are divided into 5 groups.
    - i. The eleven cities of verses 48-51
    - ii. The nine cities of verses 52-54
    - iii. The ten cities of verses 55-57
    - iv. The six cities of verses 58-59
    - v. The two cities of verse 60
  - d. Vs 61-63 - These are the wilderness cities of which there are 6 plus Jerusalem which was situated on a hill, making it quite defensible, and it would remain unconquered until the time of King David, who conquered it and made it his capital city.
    - i. Verse 63 informs us that the book of Joshua was written before the city of Jerusalem had been conquered by David, which puts the sceptics who advocate a much later date for the writing of the book back in their place.

That concludes our study of Joshua chapter 15.

Conclusion:

1. I know it's been quite a full-on study with all the geographical details given in this chapter, in many ways it is light on for practical helps, but the faithfulness of God shines through in this chapter as we see Israel rewarded for their faith. Having entered the Promised Land and made conquest by faith Israel finally claimed the promised reward of inheriting the land for their possession.
2. With that in mind I want to conclude with this thought: Israel's inheritance was preceded by years of fighting, and it is the same for us as Christians. The inheritance is coming but we must be faithful in the conquests today in order to possess the full blessing of our inheritance.

Be not weary in well doing for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.