

# Joshua - 4 - Dividing the Land by Lot

## God Commanded Joshua to Stop Fighting and Divide the Land

As Joshua has aged during the conquest of Canaan, God wants him to stop fighting and divide the land. He told Joshua that Israel would finish what he had started, and it was time for him to complete his final task of dividing the land.

*Now Joshua was old, advanced in years. And the Lord said to him: "You are old, advanced in years, and there remains very much land yet to be possessed. ... 6 them I will drive out from before the children of Israel; only divide it by lot to Israel as an inheritance, as I have commanded you. 7 Now therefore, divide this land as an inheritance to the nine tribes and half the tribe of Manasseh." Josh 13:1, 6-7*

He began with the tribes who had asked for their inheritance on the east side of the Jordan.

*With the other half-tribe the Reubenites and the Gadites received their inheritance, which Moses had given them, beyond the Jordan eastward, as Moses the servant of the Lord had given them: Josh 13:8-9*

After this, each of the rest of the tribes was given a certain portion by the casting of lots.

*Their inheritance was by lot, as the Lord had commanded by the hand of Moses, for the nine tribes and the half-tribe. 3 For Moses had given the inheritance of the two tribes and the half-tribe on the other side of the Jordan; but to the Levites he had given no inheritance among them. 4 For the children of Joseph were two tribes: Manasseh and Ephraim. And they gave no part to the Levites in the land, except cities to dwell in, with their common-lands for their livestock and their property. Josh 14:2-5*

Reuben	<u>Josh 13:15-23</u>
Gad	<u>Josh 13:24-28</u>
Manasseh(½)	<u>Josh 13:29-33</u>
Judah	<u>Josh 15:1-63</u>
Caleb	<u>Josh 15:13-19; 14:6-15</u>
Ephraim	<u>Josh 16:5-10</u>
Manasseh(½)	<u>Josh 17:1-18</u>
Benjamin	<u>Josh 18:11-28</u>
Simeon	<u>Josh 19:1-9</u>

Zebulun	<u>Josh 19:10-16</u>
Issachar	<u>Josh 19:17-23</u>
Asshur	<u>Josh 19:24-31</u>
Naptali	<u>Josh 19:32-39</u>
Dan	<u>Josh 19:40-48</u>
Joshua	<u>Josh 19:49-50</u>
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Cities of Refuge	<u>Josh 20:1-9</u>
Levitical Cities	<u>Josh 21:1-45</u>

## All God's Promises were Fulfilled

Many terrible errors have been made going on the assumption left from the Judges that Israel never received all its land. Although that is partly true because of the Israel's unfaithfulness they did not complete the task God had given them. But as far as God's promises were concerned it was **ALL** fulfilled.

*So the Lord gave to Israel all the land of which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they took possession of it and dwelt in it. 44 The Lord gave them rest all around, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers. And not a man of all their enemies stood against them; the Lord delivered all their enemies into their hand. 45 Not a word failed of any good thing which the Lord had spoken to the house of Israel. All came to pass. Josh 21:43-45*

Since all was now fulfilled, and it was up to the individual tribes to finish the taking their own land, Joshua allows the tribes whose inheritance is on the east to leave and take possession of their land.

*Then Joshua called the Reubenites, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh, 2 and said to them: "You have kept all that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, and have obeyed my voice in all that I commanded you. 3 You have not left your brethren these many days, up to this day, but have kept the charge of the commandment of the Lord your God. 4 And now the Lord your God has given rest to your brethren, as He promised them; now therefore, return and go to your tents and to the land of your possession, which Moses the servant of the Lord gave you on the other side of the Jordan. 5 But take careful heed to do the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of the Lord*

commanded you, to love the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, to keep His commandments, to hold fast to Him, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul.” 6 So Joshua blessed them and sent them away, and they went to their tents. Josh 22:1-4

## **Israel’s Faithfulness Tested**

After the Reuben, Gad and Manasseh(½) arrive in their land, word reaches Israel that they have built an altar on the other side of the Jordan. This creates great consternation and concern because at this point in time they are still faithful and seeking to serve the Lord. So much concern that the entire nation prepares for war against them.

*And when they came to the region of the Jordan which is in the land of Canaan, the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh built an altar there by the Jordan — a great, impressive altar. 11 Now the children of Israel heard someone say, “Behold, the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh have built an altar on the frontier of the land of Canaan, in the region of the Jordan — on the children of Israel’s side.” 12 And when the children of Israel heard of it, the whole congregation of the children of Israel gathered together at Shiloh to go to war against them. Josh 22:10-12*

Before doing anything rash though they send leaders to offer them the opportunity to repent of their sin.

*Then the children of Israel sent Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest to the children of Reuben, to the children of Gad, and to half the tribe of Manasseh, into the land of Gilead, 14 and with him ten rulers, one ruler each from the chief house of every tribe of Israel; and each one was the head of the house of his father among the divisions of Israel. Josh 22:13-15*

*Thus says the whole congregation of the Lord: ‘What treachery is this that you have committed against the God of Israel, to turn away this day from following the Lord, in that you have built for yourselves an altar, that you might rebel this day against the Lord? 17 Is the iniquity of Peor not enough for us, from which we are not cleansed till this day, although there was a plague in the congregation of the Lord, 18 but that you must turn away this day from following the Lord? And it shall be, if you rebel today against the Lord, that tomorrow He will be angry with the whole congregation of Israel. Josh 22:16-18*

It is refreshing to see them making the proper applications to the past. They still remember what happened at Peor, when Balaam counseled Balak to entice them to idolatry. They also add Achan and warn that the entire nation could be affected by their unfaithfulness.

*Nevertheless, if the land of your possession is unclean, then cross over to the land of the possession of the Lord, where the Lord’s tabernacle stands, and take possession among us; but do not rebel against the Lord, nor rebel against us, by building yourselves an altar besides the altar of the Lord our God. 20 Did not Achan the son of Zerah commit a trespass in the accursed thing, and wrath fell on all the congregation of Israel? And that man did not perish alone in his iniquity.” Josh 22:19-20*

At this moment, these maligned tribes offer an explanation and defense that removes all concern. They have not built this altar for worship, but as a sign and proof that they too are part of Israel if a time should ever arise when there was some doubt of that.

*“The Lord God of gods, the Lord God of gods, He knows, and let Israel itself know — if it is in rebellion, or if in treachery against the Lord, do not save us this day. 23 If we have built ourselves an altar to turn from following the Lord, or if to offer on it burnt offerings or grain offerings, or if to offer peace offerings on it, let the Lord Himself require an account. 24 But in fact we have done it for fear, for a reason, saying, ‘In time to come your descendants may speak to our descendants, saying, “What have you to do with the Lord God of Israel? 25 For the Lord has made the Jordan a border between you and us, you children of Reuben and children of Gad. You have no part in the Lord. So your descendants would make our descendants cease fearing the Lord. Josh 22:22-25*

The reality is that they were deeply concerned for the future and this altar was their guarantee that their descendants could not say that these tribes knew nothing about the Law of Moses. This altar proved that they were fully aware of the Law and its requirements.

*Therefore we said, ‘Let us now prepare to build ourselves an altar, not for burnt offering nor for sacrifice, 27 but that it may be a witness between you and us and our generations after us, that we may perform the service of the Lord before Him with our burnt offerings, with our sacrifices, and with our peace offerings; that your descendants may not say to our descendants in time to come, “You have no part in the Lord.”’ 28 Therefore we said that it will be, when they say this to us or to our generations in time to come, that we may say, ‘Here is the replica of the altar of the Lord which our fathers made, though not for burnt offerings nor for sacrifices; but it is a witness between you and us.’ Josh 22:26-29*

When they heard these words, they were very happy and knew that there was no apostasy or sin. It was they who repented of their decision to go to war and destroy the land where these tribes then lived.

*And Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, and the rulers, returned from the children of Reuben and the children of Gad, from the land of Gilead to the land of Canaan, to the children of Israel, and brought back word to them. 33 So the thing pleased the children of Israel, and the children of Israel blessed God; they spoke no more of going against them in battle, to destroy the land where the children of Reuben and Gad dwelt. 34 The children of Reuben and the children of Gad called the altar, Witness, "For it is a witness between us that the Lord is God." Josh 22:32-34*

## **Joshua's Final Words to Israel**

After a long time but undefined amount of time, Joshua is now very old and knows that his time on their earth is short. Like Moses before him and Paul many years later, he wants to address the leaders before he dies.

*Now it came to pass, a long time after the Lord had given rest to Israel from all their enemies round about, that Joshua was old, advanced in age. 2 And Joshua called for all Israel, for their elders, for their heads, for their judges, and for their officers, and said to them: "I am old, advanced in age. Josh 23:1-3*

Evidently, like most wise men, he too can see the signs of apostasy growing around him and wants to warn them against it. He begins by reminding them that God kept all His promises, but that as with all other covenants, if they want Him to continue to do so, they must keep their side of the conditions of the covenant.

*3 You have seen all that the Lord your God has done to all these nations because of you, for the Lord your God is He who has fought for you. ... 6 Therefore be very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, lest you turn aside from it to the right hand or to the left, ... 11 Therefore take careful heed to yourselves, that you love the Lord your God. 12 Or else, if indeed you do go back, and cling to the remnant of these nations — these that remain among you — and make marriages with them, and go in to them and they to you, 13 know for certain that the Lord your God will no longer drive out these nations from before you. But they shall be snares and traps to you, and scourges on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land which the Lord your God has given you. Josh 23:3, 6, 11-13*

Sadly that last statement is exactly what happened not long after he died, so these are not idle words, but words of great import that sadly they did not take to heart. It is like Paul telling Timothy to preach the word, reproving, rebuking and exhorting, since the time would come when they would turn aside unto fables. Even Timothy's preaching did not stop that after Paul and the rest of the apostles were gone and it did not stop it here either, but Joshua did his best.

He contrasted the blessings and the curses just as they had done on Mt Gerazim and Mt Ebal. Just as God had kept every word concerning the blessings He would bring them when they entered the land because they had been faithful, in exactly the same way God would keep His word concerning the curses of apostasy. It is much like those today seeking to remove the punishment of Hell. They want there to be a heaven, but want hell to be a misunderstanding. But the same God who promised heaven has also warned of Hell.

*"Behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth. And you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one thing has failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spoke concerning you. All have come to pass for you; not one word of them has failed. 15 Therefore it shall come to pass, that as all the good things have come upon you which the Lord your God promised you, so the Lord will bring upon you all harmful things, until He has destroyed you from this good land which the Lord your God has given you. Josh 23:14-16*

## **A Second Meeting and Address**

After this initial meeting with all the leaders, Joshua again assembles Israel at Shiloh. This may have been one of the regular feast days when all Israel was gathered together, but it may also have been a special meeting just for this purpose. Once again, Joshua speaks of his deep concern at the signs of apostasy that he is aware of.

He sums up their history and gives some information about Terah not found in Genesis.

*Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem and called for the elders of Israel, for their heads, for their judges, and for their officers; and they presented themselves before God. 2 And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the Lord God of Israel: 'Your fathers, including Terah, the father of*

*Abraham and the father of Nahor, dwelt on the other side of the River in old times; and they served other gods. 3 Then I took your father Abraham from the other side of the River, led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his descendants and gave him Isaac. Josh 24:1-3*

He reminds Israel of God's taking them out of Egypt and bringing them to Canaan and giving them the land just as He promised. He concludes with a strong warning that they must put away the god's they had been serving and continued to serve. God addressed this many years later through Amos just prior to their going into Assyrian captivity.

*"Did you offer Me sacrifices and offerings In the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel? 26 You also carried Sikkuth your king And Chiun, your idols, The star of your gods, Which you made for yourselves. 27 Therefore I will send you into captivity beyond Damascus," Says the Lord, whose name is the God of hosts. Amos 5:25-27*

Joshua then words one of the most often quoted words from his book about the choice they must make and the one he had made long long ago.

*"Now therefore, fear the Lord, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the Lord! 15 And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Josh 24:14-15*

Joshua hears their answer of fidelity and faithfulness but challenges them for more. Though they offer to serve the Lord, he is deeply concerned and warned them that they would not long fulfill what they were promising that day.

*So the people answered and said: "Far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods; 17 for the Lord our God is He who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, who did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way that we went and among all the people through whom we passed. ... 19 But Joshua said to the people, "You cannot serve the Lord, for He is a holy God. He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. 20 If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and consume you, after He has done you good." 21 And the people said to Joshua, "No, but we will serve the Lord!" 22 So Joshua said to the people, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the Lord for yourselves, to serve Him." And they said, "We are witnesses!" Josh 24:16-18*

At that time, Joshua added to the words written in the Law. This is evidence that Joshua himself wrote the words of his book, leaving only the final words for another to complete. We do not know who wrote this addendum, but very probably the author of the Judges since that book begins as they one ends.

*26 Then Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God. And he took a large stone, and set it up there under the oak that was by the sanctuary of the Lord. ... 29 Now it came to pass after these things that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being one hundred and ten years old. 30 And they buried him within the border of his inheritance at Timnath Serah, which is in the mountains of Ephraim, on the north side of Mount Gaash. Josh 24:26, 29-30*

The final words of Joshua are heartening until we read the first words of Judges and find the rest of that story which is truly heart breaking. Israel remained faithful throughout the life of Joshua and even the elders who outlived Joshua. But when the generation who had been born and lived during the forty years in the wilderness passed from the earth, the faithfulness of Israel passed with them.

*Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had known all the works of the Lord which He had done for Israel. Josh 24:31*

*So the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord which He had done for Israel. Judg 2:7-8*

*When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the Lord nor the work which He had done for Israel. 11 Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served the Baals; 12 and they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; and they followed other gods from among the gods of the people who were all around them, and they bowed down to them; and they provoked the Lord to anger. Judg 2:10-12*