



A MODEL OF OBEDIENCE • PROMISES AND PERSEVERANCE •

JOSHUA 12:1-14:5 • 04/01/2018

MAIN POINT

Knowing that God will keep His promises empowers believers to persevere in doing His will.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**Share about a time when you failed to finish an important project or task.
What distracted you from completing the task?**

**Why do we sometimes fail to finish the tasks we set out to accomplish?
What does this tell us about ourselves?**

God had made a covenant with Israel and promised to establish them in a new land. Israel simply had to trust Him in the process of taking the land. In Joshua 12-14, we find that Israelites had driven their enemies out of most but not all of the land God had promised them. There were still portions of the Promised Land where Israel's enemies reigned and exercised influence over the Israelites. While Israel's job of taking the Promised Land was almost complete, it remained unfinished because of the Israelites' wavering faith. When God calls us to do something, we must trust Him as we see the task through to the end. Doing God's will requires perseverance.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| SUMMARIZE JOSHUA 12:1-24.

The first half of Joshua 12 (vv. 1-6) describes the kings and the lands “beyond the Jordan” that the Israelites had conquered under the leadership of Moses. Moses allocated these lands to Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. The second half of this chapter (vv. 7-24) lists the 31 kings “Joshua and the Israelites struck down” from “the land beyond the Jordan to the west.”

Why was it important for the Israelites to remember the many kings they had defeated in their efforts to take the Promised Land?

How do you see God's hand in these verses (see Exodus 23:20-23, 27-31)?

| SUMMARIZE JOSHUA 13:1-14:5.

Joshua 13:1-14:5 describes the allotment of land that was given to each of the remaining tribes of Israel. However, these verses also make clear that while Israel had driven out

many of their enemies, there was much land that they had yet to possess. We also learn in these verses that the eastern tribes had failed to drive out some of their enemies as God had commanded.

What is significant about Joshua being “old” and “getting on in years”? Why do you think this is emphasized at this point in Israel’s campaign to take the Promised Land?

Look at verse 6. What promise did God give Joshua? What command did God give Joshua?

Why does the promise come before the command? What happens when we lose sight of God’s promises when we are seeking to do His will?

While Israel had made tremendous progress toward fulfilling God’s command to take the Promised Land, there still remained portions controlled by their enemies. Furthermore, the task of allotting the land remained. Joshua’s advanced age demonstrated that He was an unlikely candidate to lead Israel’s military in taking the remaining land. Joshua’s age, however, is inconsequential in light of God’s faithfulness to His promises. In reference to Israel’s enemies that still occupied the Promise Land, God told Joshua, “I will drive them out before the Israelites” (v. 6). God’s gracious promise to once again fight for Israel strengthened Joshua to take on this campaign in his old age and tackle the daunting task of allotting the Promised Land to the tribes of Israel.

Look at verse 13. Why didn't the people of Israel drive out the Geshurites and the Maacathites? What hindered their perseverance? What tends to hinder your perseverance?

God’s concern in commanding the Israelites not to make a covenant with any of the pagan people who occupied the Promised Land (Ex. 23:32) had nothing to do with their ethnicity and everything to do with their false worship. God, in His providence, knew that if these pagans were allowed to live among the people of Israel they would drive the Israelites to worship their false gods (Ex. 23:33). Now that Christ has come, we no longer need to fear our faith being compromised by living among nonbelievers. As those who have been redeemed by Christ and filled with the Holy Spirit, we can resist the temptation to worship the many false gods in our culture. By God’s grace we can point

the lost people around us to Christ and the salvation that can be found only through faith in Him.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

In what situations or circumstances do you find it most difficult to persevere in your faith? What promises of God could you remind yourself of in such times?

What role do spiritual disciplines like prayer, Bible study, and accountability play in persevering in faith?

How might remembering God's past faithfulness help us persevere in the present?

PRAY

Thank God for His many precious, faithful, and loving promises. Pray that God would help your group members to remember His promises so that they might find the strength they need to persevere in doing God's will and living for His glory.

COMMENTARY

JOSHUA 12:1-14:5

12:1-6. A summary review of all the land acquired by Israel begins with the territories east of or “beyond the Jordan.” The summary is given in terms of regions, outlined by towns. The conquest of this region took place while Moses remained alive (Num 21:21-35).

12:9-24. The 31 kings listed cover the entire region, with those in verses 9-16 including the victories in the south described in chapters 6-10; and those in verses 17-24 summarizing the victories in the north as discussed in chapter 11. The structure of this list parallels many itineraries of Egyptian pharaohs that describe their conquests in Canaan between the fifteenth century B.C. and the tenth century B.C. The hieroglyphic writings show individual prisoners, one tied to the next with their hands bound behind them. On the bodies of each of these prisoners is written the name of one of the towns of Canaan. Each of these represents either a town in Canaan that the pharaoh defeated or an army from that town that was defeated. All these elements are found in the Israelite summary. Its resemblance to the Egyptian texts may have been intentional. As Egypt’s New Kingdom empire declined and disappeared by 1150 B.C., Israel’s presence and increasing power would replace and thus continue the defeat of Egypt, its gods, and its pharaoh. This process began with the plagues and the exodus.

13:1. Joshua first appeared in Ex 17:9-13 where he was already the leader of Israel’s armies. The chronology of the Pentateuch entails some 40 years of wandering in the wilderness and what Jos 11:18 describes as “a long time” of waging war before Joshua’s death. In 24:29 Joshua died at 110. The expression getting on in years establishes Joshua as at the end of his active life and military leadership. Here he and Israel transitioned from military activity to allotment of the land. Despite the long list of towns and their kings who were defeated in chapter 12, the Lord confirmed that a great deal of the land remained to be possessed.

13:2-7. The regions not yet occupied include areas on the fringes of the promised land. The land of the Philistines is described in verse 3. The five towns of the Philistines appear here for the first time. The Shihor has been described as the Brook of Egypt (15:4). The word for rulers (Hb “seren”) is a term only applied to Philistines. This may be connected to the Gk “tyrannos,” with the meaning “tyrant, ruler.” The Avvites appear as a people living south of the region of the Philistines (Dt 2:23). The Geshurites include those inhabiting the region north and east of the Sea of Galilee.

13:4. Arah is not otherwise known, but the region of the Sidonians includes coastal areas at the northern end of the region occupied by the 12 tribes. Aphek appeared earlier (12:18). It lay on the coastal plain between Joppa and Dor where the plain narrowed and the hill country (the border of the Amorites) reached closest to the Mediterranean Sea.

13:5. The land of the Gebalites was Byblos, an important coastal city north of Sidon in modern Lebanon. The entrance of Hamath, sometimes called Lebo-hamath, is the most northern place described. It is identified with modern Lebweh north of the Beqa'a.

13:6. God's promise to drive... out the remaining occupants of the land is followed by a command to distribute the land at this time. The land was not completely conquered, so Israel was still challenged to fulfill the command it had been given.

13:7. The command to divide this land is repeated, emphasizing its importance. The nine tribes and half the tribe of Manasseh exclude Reuben, Gad, and the other half of Manasseh, who received an allotment east of the Jordan River.

13:8-33. The territory described in this section is identical to the combined areas controlled by Sihon and Og as described in 12:1-5.

13:9. The text begins in the south along the Arnon Valley, the border with Moab. The Medeba plateau includes the tableland that rises east of the Dead Sea. Dibon is perhaps not modern Tell Dhiban because the archaeological evidence for habitation from this period is lacking. Nevertheless, contemporary Egyptian scribes writing of campaigns in the area knew and identified the city of Dibon.

13:10. The border of the Ammonites lay to the east and north of Israel's inheritance and Sihon's previous kingdom. Its capital was Rabbah, modern Amman.

13:13. The presence of Geshur and Maacath as independent entities is attested during the time of David. He married the daughter of Geshur's king and fathered Absalom (2Sam 3:3).

13:14. In accord with Dt 18:1, the tribe of Levi received no inheritance of land.

13:15-23. Reuben's allotment also began at Aroer on the rim of the Arnon Valley. It is described through a town list (vv. 17-20).

13:21-22. For the deaths of Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur...Reba, and Balaam son of Beor, see Num 31:8.

13:25. With Rabbah (modern Amman) as the Ammonite capital, this allotment took over half the land of the Ammonites.

13:26. This verse appears to designate towns along the border of Gad located in the higher plateau region inland toward the desert.

13:27. This verse provides a list of towns in the Jordan Valley extending as far north as the Sea of Chinnereth (Galilee). The identification of Succoth with modern Tell Deir 'Alla is intriguing in light of verse 22 because at this site in 1967 archaeologists discovered fragmentary texts on white plaster that describe purported visions of Balaam son of Beor.

13:30. Jair's Villages numbered 60 cities (here "city" is a term that can describe a small hamlet). A judge named Jair (Jdg 10:4) had 30 sons who ruled over half of them.

13:31. In 17:1 Machir son of Manasseh received Gilead and Bashan east of the Jordan. The other sons of Manasseh received inheritances west of that river.

13:33. As with the regional summary of verses 8-14, so the summary of specific allotments ends with a note about the absence of a portion for the tribe of Levi.

14:1 Eleazar was the son of Aaron, and his successor as well as the leader of the Levites (Ex 6:23-25; Num 20:25-28; 26:60; Dt 10:6). He used the Urim (and Thummim) to determine God's will and to allot the tribal lands (Num 27:19-22; 34:17). The land of Canaan implies that the region east of the Jordan River, allotted in the previous chapter, was not part of Canaan.

14:2. The use of the lot for the distribution of the land is commanded in Num 26:55-56; 33:54; 34:13; 36:2. The size of the tribe was also considered (Num 33:54). The lot was not considered arbitrary but was directed by God (Pr 16:33).

14:3-4. This introduction mentions the absence of Levitical lands twice and explicitly anticipates the allotment of towns to that tribe in chapter 21. The absence of the Levites should reduce the number of eligible tribes to 11, but Joseph's two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, each received a tribal inheritance.

READING ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK

Joshua 17:15-18; Joshua 18:1-5