**Land Still to be Taken**

The barn I started construction on about 2 years ago is complete, not in a literal sense mind you, but rather in a relative sense. Oh sure, it has a roof and walls but it also has a dirt floor (partially covered in leaves) and 2 doors are yet to be installed. It is also finished in a comparative sense as it is much further along than the barn near my house that was started a year ago and is yet to have siding installed (see Luke 18:9-14). Undeterred by the condition of the barn, I have occupied much of the indoor(?) space with a vast array of wood slabs and tools are strewn about with little organization. My solution to an inability to find a tool is to buy another one. The property is littered with unseen tools and parts of equipment lurking about under the ground in quantities that would provoke a reaction to a metal detector rivaling that of a Geiger counter at Three Mile Island. My brother, on the other hand, is the anti Richard with a garage so immaculate that he covers his sports car even though it’s parked inside unlike my vehicles that are doomed to live in the driveway, regularly peppered by falling hickory nuts that make the sound of gunshots on impact. One might wonder, why don’t I do something about these intolerable conditions. The answer is that they are tolerable for me since time that would be devoted to finishing the barn and organizing my tools would subtract from time spent in other, more profitable pursuits such as fishing, so you might say I have moved in but not taken up residence. In our study of Joshua chapters 13 & 14, the Israelites have conquered some of the land, but not all, and God instructed Joshua to begin parceling out the land to the tribes. To the people, that may have seemed like counting chickens before they hatched since Canaanites still occupied much of the land and they seemed to be content with conditions that God deemed intolerable, namely having Canaanites as neighbors. Perhaps they were so used to wandering in the desert that taking up permanent residence seemed unnatural.

Chapter 13 begins with God telling Joshua that he was very old and there was still much land to be taken over in Canaan. While the defeat of the southern and northern kings is covered in just 2 chapters, it likely took 5 years to accomplish and Joshua may have been as old as 100. I think God was conveying the urgency to get on with settling the land while Joshua was still alive to oversee it. God then described the lands still under the control of Canaanites which included land occupied by Philistines and other clans. The land bordered the Mediterranean Sea south of Joppa and north of Accho and extended east into Lebanon. God said the He would drive out the Sidonians and told Joshua to divide the land as an inheritance for the 9 & ½ tribes west of the Jordan.

What follows in the remainder of the chapter is a detailed description of the land which was occupied by the tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh. They had stopped short of entering Canaan when they saw land east of the Jordan River that they preferred to land God had planned for them in the promised land, perhaps thinking a bird in the hand was better than 2 in the bush. The description includes the statement that they did not drive out the people of Geshur and Maacah who continued to live among them.

Chapter 14 is the beginning of the division of the land west of the Jordan River which continues through chapter 21. The land allocated to each tribe was determined by a team consisting of Joshua, Eleazar the chief priest and leaders of the tribal clans. The Levites were not granted any land since they received the high honor of serving God in the tabernacle.

In verse 8, Caleb went to Joshua with a request for a specific plot of land. He recounted how he and Joshua were the only 2 spies Moses had sent into Canaan who trusted God enough to recommend going in to take the land. Because of that, Moses promised land for Caleb’s inheritance. God also promised it to Caleb (see Num. 14-23-24). He stood before Joshua at 85 years of age with the same zeal he had 45 years earlier. He asked for Hebron knowing that it was occupied by Anakites who lived in large, fortified cities. He told Joshua that with God’s help, he would drive them out of the land. He would not be content to live among them, viewing them as intolerable just as God did. What conditions do we tolerate that God does not?

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