**Division of the Rest of the Land**

Last week we read in Joshua chapters 15-17 about the first 3 tribes to inherit land west of the Jordan River and the next 2 chapters are devoted to how the remaining land was to be divided among the 7 other tribes. With so much attention given to the land division among the tribes, another important event might be overlooked, that is the selection of Shiloh as a permanent site for the tabernacle. Matthew Henry noted several significant details about the location of the tabernacle: 1. Shiloh was located in the territory of Ephraim which was the tribe of Joshua so if was both an honor and a convenience to located the tabernacle near Israel’s leader. 2. Shiloh was centrally located with Judah to the south and Joseph to the north making it possible for travelers to reach the tabernacle within a reasonable length of time (see Deut. Chapter 12). 3. Shiloh was the prophetic name for Jesus used by Jacob during his blessings to his sons (see Gen. 49:10). Since the tabernacle was God’s earthly dwelling place, it was fitting for its location to bear a name of Jesus. It is ironic that God later destroyed Shiloh because of the rampant sin of the Israelites (see Jer. 7:12).

In verse 3, Joshua rebuked the 7 tribes who had not taken land as their inheritance, asking them how long would they wait. They seemed to be comfortable remaining near the tribes of Judah, Ephraim and Manasseh rather than subjecting their families to another extended march. The victories over the Canaanite kings had been accomplished in the company of all the tribes and the thought of going it alone to take more territory may have been unappealing. Regardless of their motives, Joshua would not allow them to be complacent, ordering them to go and survey the land after which God would set the boundaries for each of the 7 tribes.

The first of the 7 tribes to have land allocated was Benjamin who, like Joseph, was the son of Rachel whom Jacob loved more than his other wives. The land given to Benjamin was very small in comparison to that of Judah and Joseph and lay between those tribes. Benjamin alone remained with Judah after the split of the northern tribes which occurred generations later (see Deut. 33:12). While the land grant was small, it did have Jerusalem as a principal city within its borders. Jacob’s blessing for Benjamin was “Benjamin is a ravenous wolf. In the morning he devours his prey, in the evening he divides his plunder”. It is thought this refers to Benjamin’s warlike tendencies, a trait that cost them dearly as they later fought against all the other tribes, losing 25,000 soldiers in battle (see Judges chapter 20). Significant members of the tribe of Benjamin include Saul, Mordecai, Esther and Paul.

Chapter 19 contains the description of the land given to the remaining 6 tribes. The first named is Simeon whose land was a small subdivision of the land given to Judah fulfilling Jacob’s prophecy that Simeon would be divided in Jacob. Important cities in Simeon included Beersheba and Ziklag. There were no prominent citizens named in the Bible who were from this tribe.

Zebulon was next, receiving a small bit of land north of Manasseh. Matthew Henry wrote that its western border was the Mediterranean Sea, however most biblical scholars dispute that and most maps show Zebulon as landlocked. The beginning of the description in verse 11 says their border went up *toward* the sea. Jacob’s prophecy of this tribe was that they would live by the seashore and become a haven for ships. Even if they were landlocked, they did live very close to the Mediterranean so seafaring would have been natural for them. In the Old Testament, Mount Carmel is the most famous place in Zebulon, its renown eclipsed by Nazareth which was the home of Jesus.

Issachar’s land was the next to be granted and was another small parcel. It bordered Zebulon, a tribe whose blessing by Moses was intertwined with theirs (see Deut. 33:18-19). Tola who was a judge and Baasha who was a king were from this tribe. One of its cities was Jezreel which housed the infamous King Ahab’s palace.

Asher’s land was next, having all of its western border fronting on the Mediterranean Sea. The blessings of Jacob and Moses referred to rich food and feet bathed in oil, indicating the wealth of that tribe amassed by sea trade. The only person of note from Asher was Anna the prophetess who was at the temple when Jesus was presented there shortly after his birth.

Naphtali was next and its land bordered that of Asher on the west and the Jordan River on the east. Naphtali and Asher were the northernmost tribes. Within Naphtali’s borders were the cities of Capernaum and Bethsaida where Jesus performed miracles. The blessings for this tribe were positive, a doe set free and abounding in favor. Barak who led an army against the Canaanites was from Naphtali (see Judges chapter 4).

The last tribe to receive its land was the tribe of Dan. Its land bordered Judah, Ephraim and Benjamin. It also bordered land of the Philistines. Its most famous citizen was Samson who constantly fought the Philistines who lived to the south. The blessings for this tribe described it as a lion springing from Bashan, perhaps referring to the tribe’s later conquest of additional land beyond its territory (see Judges chapter 18). It is noteworthy that the tribe of Dan is not among the tribes listed in in the 144,000 sealed servants in Revelation chapter 7.

Chapter 19 concludes with Joshua being given a city in Ephraim for his residence.