



RECEIVE YOUR INHERITANCE, PT1

How many of us made use of a map over the summer? Or did we simply rely on our phones to figure out where we were, where we needed to be, and how to get there?

Maps have been important to people for literal ages. To prove it, here are some examples going back millennia:

- The Hereford Mapa Mundi, c1300 AD.
- The Babylonian map of the world, c600 BC.
- The Mezhyrich mammoth-tusk map, c13,000 BC.

Today we're going to look at a selection of passages which can only be described as a 'map in words.' See if you can identify the 'magic word' in these chapters ...

Joshua 13:1-13; 14:1-5; 5:1; 16:1-4; 18:1-10; 19:49-51

What's the magic word? Inheritance (*nakhlah*). It's used just over 200 times in the entire OT, 57 of them in the book of Joshua – so, more often than any other book.

Now it can be easy to look at passages like this, even attempt to read it all, and simply glaze over, glance over, or gloss over, the details. I mean, maps can be handy, vital in fact. But they don't necessarily add up to a riveting read: they're not going to win the Booker Prize. And because of that, we can

miss why this part of Joshua mattered so much to *them* – and why it might matter to *us*, too.

So, today I'm going to do some of the work for you. You can divide the allotting of the land into 3 sections:

- That which had been taken already (east of Jordan).
- That which was *being* taken (Judah and Ephraim).
- That which was yet to be taken (the rest of the land).

And in amongst it all, there are phrases which carry a bit more meaning than just "This land belongs to so-and-so." They highlight the mission God had put them there for –

And raise points that are relevant to *our* mission, too.

1) Some battles are easier, some harder. Several times we're told "so-and-so tribe could not dislodge such-and-such a people: to this day, they still live among them" (13:13, etc). Does this mean the Israelites weren't trying hard enough, or weren't praying hard enough, or weren't believing hard enough? Maybe. And let's face it, there are probably times when God wants *us* to speak or act on His behalf, and instead, we keep our heads down.

But equally, it might indicate that God does things in His way, not ours; and in His time, not ours. We might do all the right things and still not see the results we expect. And we might not understand the reasons, but one thing's for certain: He can see what we can't; He can see the bigger picture. As He says in Isaiah 55:8, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways, My ways."

God doesn't call us to have it all sussed: He calls us to be obedient, to be faithful in what He's given us. So, let's be.

2) Some regions are larger, some smaller. Judah, for example, is so big that Simeon is granted a homeland 'within' it. Manasseh gets 2 bits of territory: one east of the Jordan, one west of it. And the Levites get no territory at all, apart from a bit of land within each of the other tribes (and eventually, the plot where the temple is to be built).

Why does God do this? Because it gives them – and us – scope for generosity, for sharing resources that benefit others and enable us to extend the kingdom of God, together. And because it's God who's giving this to us, there's no room for boasting, no room for saying "Look at me, look at what I've achieved" or "It's all about us." And there's no room for envy, either (note to self).

All of which means we need a picture of the kingdom that is bigger than us and our patch. Us and our successes. Us and the particular time in which we live.

3) Some landscapes are nicer, some harsher. Looking at the geography of Israel, there's no 2 ways about it: not everything is all milk and honey. In the north it's greener, cooler, lusher. Those on the coast are exposed to

breezes off the Med. Those near the Jordan have access to fresh, cool water. But those in the south – notably Benjamin and Judah – have a fair bit of desert to contend with. I wonder if there was a bit of “Oh, thanks God. What have I done to deserve this bunch of rocks?”

But what’s interesting is that those harsh places are the ones where kings were born (Saul in Benjamin, David and Solomon in Judah) and where the temple was built. I.e. looks aren’t everything: sometimes, the greatest heroes are produced by the toughest of environments.

So, if it feels as if God has given you a metaphorical desert to live in, work in, and serve Him in, take heart:

He might be making a hero of you.

4) Some successes are now, some later. It can be easy to make some assumptions when you read Joshua – one being that the entire land is conquered within his lifetime. That is not the case. Joshua and his surveyors are dividing up the land ahead of time – hence Joshua’s pep-talk in ch24, and the fact that Israel is still doing this in the book of Judges, and at the time of Saul and David.

What’s the point? That some churches will see victory now, some later; some ministries will see victory now, some later; some missionaries will see victory now, some later – if at all in this life. Church history is full of those who can testify to both.

But understand that whatever category you find yourself in, you are merely a bit-part. As Paul says, “I planted, Apollos watered, but God made it grow” (1 Corinthians 3:6). The important thing is to be ready for God to use *you* – wherever you are on the map. Are you ready?

The Meek Will Inherit ...

As I said, you can divide this ‘map’ into that which has already been taken, that which is being taken, and that which is yet to be taken. Or, if you’re looking to apply it still further, you could phrase it like this:

- Rejoice in what has already been done.
- Resolve to do what needs to be done, now.
- Recognise what must wait ‘til tomorrow.

And those 3 things will be the experience of all of us, ‘til Jesus returns, His kingdom is established, and His promise to His followers is finally fulfilled: “The meek will inherit the earth.”

In the meantime, may we acknowledge the territory God has given us – and serve Him in it.