

The Land Under Our Feet

August 6, 2023

Lesson Summary

Main Passages

Joshua 14:1-15

Session Outline

1. Dividing the Land (Joshua 14:1-5)
2. The Promise (Joshua 14:6-9)
3. Following God Completely (Joshua 14:10-15)

Theological Theme

God always keeps His word and fulfills His promises. When God's people follow Him wholeheartedly, they will reap the benefits and blessings that come from being faithful to God.



Leader Guide

The Land Under Our Feet

Introduction

At what age do people typically start serving in the church? What age does someone “retire” from serving? In many churches today, people overlook the usefulness of all ages. Some attempt to keep younger people from serving until they are older and more mature while others overlook the value of using older adults as leaders. The truth is there is no perfect age to do what God has called you to do.

The key is that when God calls you to serve, you should serve. When God calls you to step out in faith, that is the right time to step out in faith. The account we will study today is a great reminder that neither youth nor age disqualifies us from leading and setting a strong example for others to follow. The capacity for godly leadership is about the heart of a person and his or her relationship with the Lord. Caleb was a shining example both as a younger person and as an older person. The consistent thing we see with his life is that he trusted God and that made the difference.



Have you ever thought about where you would like to spend retirement? Doing what?

Session Summary

After taking possession of the promised land, the time came to divide the land among the various tribes. Joshua diligently assigned the land according to the plans of the Lord.

Caleb reminded Joshua of the promises made to him years earlier about the land under his feet. He referred to the time when they had gone into the land as spies and stressed that he had followed the Lord completely and served Him faithfully (see Numbers 13). In response, Joshua honored Caleb’s request on behalf of God, who always keeps His promises. Those who follow the Lord and serve Him will be blessed.

1. Dividing the Land (Joshua 14:1-5)

Once the promised land was secured, the land needed to be assigned to each of the tribes of Israel. Leaders from each tribe gathered and, under Joshua's leadership, they cast lots for the different plots of Canaan. Although there were technically twelve tribes of Israel, the two sons of Joseph were included as leaders of their own tribes, and no land was given directly to the Levites, totaling thirteen groups to consider.

Imagine the anticipation as leaders from each branch of the Israelites gathered to find out what portion of the promised land would be theirs. Their future and the future of their families would be forever affected by the decisions made that day. Each leader wanted the best for their tribe and likely had certain ideas about what would work out most favorably for them.

- ❓ What factors might have played into the desires of each leader in receiving their plot of land?

Despite individual preferences, the process was to cast lots. This was designed and directed by the Lord following the guidelines He gave Moses earlier. Under the direction of the Lord, Joshua, and Eleazar the priest, the process was straightforward and clear. With all the tribe leaders gathered to supervise and observe, they began to divide the land.

- ❓ Why does it matter that the process of dividing the land was designed and directed by the Lord? How did this determine the future of the leaders and their families? How often do you think of your life as being directed by the Lord?

We learn that only nine and a half tribes were allotted land that day because two and half tribes had requested that they be given land on the other side of the Jordan river. This took place when the children of Israel were gathered on the wilderness side of the Jordan preparing to cross the river and begin the process of taking the promised land (see Joshua 13).

- ❓ Application: What do you learn about trusting the Lord from how the land was divided? In what sense might this be viewed as leaving things "to chance"? Why was that not the case? Why is that also not the case in your life?

2. The Promise (Joshua 14:6-9)

During the gathering, Caleb stepped forward with a request. Caleb was from the tribe of Judah and one of the twelve spies who had scouted the land prior to the conquest. About forty-five years earlier (see Joshua 13:10), Moses chose one man from each tribe and sent them into the promised land to spy out the situation (see Numbers 13). The spies were to bring back a report about the situation and what would be involved to move into the promised land and conquer the people living there.

Of the twelve spies sent, Caleb and Joshua were the only two to return with a positive report. While the other ten spies saw the obstacles and felt overwhelmed with the prospect of taking the land, Caleb saw the potential and believed that since God had given the land to them, He would enable and empower the Israelites to take it. The other ten spies were scared and believed Israel would be destroyed if they attempted to take the land. They didn't have faith in the Lord to trust Him for the victory, and the rest of the people listened to the ten spies instead of Joshua and Caleb.

Caleb's Testimony

Caleb was the first of Judah to claim his land. He recalled how forty-five years earlier he had brought a favorable report at Kadesh Barnea when he urged Israel to possess Canaan. Caleb's testimony magnified God's faithfulness. Even in his old age Caleb had the courage and vigor to follow the Lord.



What did you learn about Caleb's character in these verses? What quality of Caleb's life do you want for yourself?


That moment of poor decision-making for the people of Israel on the banks of the Jordan river, led to forty years of wandering in the wilderness. Now, they had finally reached the point where they could settle into the land God promised to them. Their unbelief resulted in their wandering because God would not allow the people of unbelief to reside in the place of His promise.



How do you see belief or unbelief in the Lord affecting your life? How have you rationalized away from doing what God has called you to do or bringing the presence of Jesus where He has planted you?

The people had not listened to Caleb's encouragement, but that did not change the fact that Caleb remained faithful to God. Those who had been unfaithful died in the wilderness wandering because of their sin. It only makes sense that Caleb's tribe would be the first to receive its allotment on the Canaan side of the Jordan. Caleb reminded Joshua about the promise Moses made to him regarding Caleb's future inheritance in the promised land.


Note the way Caleb recounted the previous conversation with their former leader. He was bold; he spoke with conviction; and he told the truth. He didn't say anything about himself that wasn't true, and he quoted the very thing Moses had said about him. We should be people who imitate Caleb's boldness, asking for what God has already promised. Moses described Caleb as following the Lord completely. If we faithfully follow the Lord as Caleb did, evidence will show up in our words and the way we live. Caleb's dedication to the Lord and his boldness in asking God to keep His promise were key factors in Caleb's request being granted.

 Application: Where do you need to seek further faithfulness before God? Where do you need to be obedient in asking God to fulfill what He has promised in your life?


3. Following God Completely (Joshua 14:10-15)

Caleb made it clear his boldness and strength came from his faith in God. His advancing age didn't diminish him; he was still the same faithful man. Caleb's story is a good reminder that age is not the most important thing about a person standing for the Lord and making a difference—faith is.

Interestingly, Caleb did not ask for the easy road. The area he requested would come with a fight, and he wouldn't back down. The Anakim lived in that region, and they would need to be dealt with. Too many times, people who claim to be believers contentedly avoid spiritual battles. But Caleb willingly faced the battle because of his trust in God. Not only did he not avoid the conflict, but he also even asked for the opportunity to stand for the Lord against the enemy.


 What are some excuses you use today that may prevent you from living out the call God has given you? How does trust in God motivate us to stand for Him?

Part of Caleb's boldness came from remembering the activity of God in his life to that point. He remembered that God had been with him before and trusted God would empower him to face the enemy once again. Think about what it would mean in the church today for Christians to remember what God has already done on our behalf and then trust Him to do that and even more going forward. Many times, the church's lack of impact is not because God is unwilling to work but because we are unwilling to obey Him.

-  What makes it hard for you to trust God for the victory in the battles we face? How does remembering God's past work in your life help?

Caleb did not leave the work to someone else. He continued leading with boldness, strength, and faith in every situation that came his way. Imagine if all members of the church decided to step up and do what needed to be done without looking for an excuse to leave the work to someone else. There would be no shortage of workers to fulfill the mission of the Lord.

Verse 14 describes Caleb clearly: "He followed the LORD, the God of Israel, completely." That is the difference. Caleb did not halfway love the Lord. He did not pick and choose when to serve or trust God. He was not semi-committed to being a believer. He followed the Lord completely. His heart was focused one hundred percent on believing God, and he did not let anything distract or draw him from that. Can we say the same?

-  Application: What do you think God has called you to do? What keeps you from completely following the Lord today? What do you think is your next step?

Conclusion

The Lord is faithful, and He always keeps His promises. Although the children of Israel experienced forty years in the wilderness due to their rejection of God's plan, He still brought them into the promised land. When it was time to distribute the land to the various tribes of Israel, leaders from each tribe gathered with Joshua and Eleazar, the priest, for the allotment as the Lord had commanded Moses years earlier.

Even though the fulfillment of God's promises can take years, everything He God promises will happen at the right time, in His perfect timing. Caleb represented the tribe of Judah, and he brought a bold request concerning the land they were to receive. He recounted a promise Moses made when Caleb was one of the spies who scouted out the land and one of the only two in favor of trusting God and taking the land. Because of their faithfulness to the Lord, they promised Caleb he would receive the land under his feet for Judah.

This passage is a reminder that God keeps His promises. We can stand firm against the naysayers and doubters. We can continue the work of the Lord and "fight the good fight" because He has promised to be with us and empower us. Consider the land under your feet and whether you are trusting God the way you should or if you are believing those who act in fear and doubt. God's people were meant to live in God's land. Do you trust Him to bring it to pass?

- ❓ How have you been guilty of listening to those who are acting out of fear and doubt instead of faith in God?
- ❓ Where has God planted you? (Work, neighborhood, hobbies, interests, etc.) How is God calling you to live in this environment?
- ❓ How might you have a gospel conversation with another person based on today's study?

Prayer of Response

Thank the Lord for always keeping His promises and never leaving you on your own against the enemy. Ask for boldness to stand for Him in faith as Caleb did.

Additional Resources

- *Exalting Jesus in Joshua* by Robert Smith Jr.
- *Be Strong* by Warren Wiersbe
- *Joshua* by David Howard Jr.

Disciples Multiplying Disciples



Questions to Guide Your Group's Discussion

1. What does this passage say?
2. What did this passage mean to its original audience?
3. What does this passage tell us about God?
4. What does this passage tell us about man?
5. What does this passage demand of me?
6. How does this passage change the way I relate to people? (*How can you use this information this week at work or with friends and neighbors?*)
7. How does this passage prompt me to pray to God?

*Adapted from Seven Arrows by Matt Rogers pastor of The Church at Cherrydale, Greenville, SC

For Next Week

Session Title

- The Gifts You Bring

Main Passages

- Ephesians 4:7-16

Session Outline

1. The Giving of Gifts (Ephesians 4:7-10)
2. The Purpose of Gifts (Ephesians 4:11-12)
3. The Goal of Gifts (Ephesians 4:13-16)

Memorize

My brothers who went with me caused the people to lose heart, but I followed the Lord my God completely. - Joshua 14:8

Prayer

- 1.) Pray that God would show you the places He has for you to serve in your church and your community.
- 2.) Reflect on the promises of God and pray over how God fulfills those in your life and the lives of those around you.

Historical Context of Joshua

Purpose

Just as Joshua's leadership begins with the death of Moses, so the book of Joshua follows and completes the book of Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy serves as a means by which the new generation of Israelites renewed their covenant with God. The book of Joshua provides the means by which God fulfilled his part of the covenant. God gave them victories, but each victory required a step of faith. God's provision for the people as their leader and guide bore witness to later generations of the divinely willed leadership for Israel, and his gracious gift of the land showed how the people's faithful fulfillment of the covenant could result in abundant blessing.

Author

The author of the book of Joshua is not identified in the Bible and otherwise remains anonymous. If Joshua himself did not originally compose the book that bears his name, then it may be presumed that someone who knew him and his exploits recorded the work. There are numerous references throughout Joshua that suggest a final formation of the book after his lifetime. These include the death of Joshua and descriptions of memorials or names that are said to remain "still ... today" (4:9; 5:9; 6:25; 7:26; 8:28–29; 10:27; 13:13; 14:14; 15:63; 16:10; 22:17; 23:8).

Setting

The accounts in the book of Joshua occur in the period immediately after Moses's death. This was a new generation, not the one that had left Egypt. The story of Joshua is thus set when the nation of Israel first appeared in the land west of the Jordan River—the land that would bear their name. First Kings 6:1 states that the exodus occurred 480 years before Solomon's fourth year as king (966 BC). In Jdg 11:26, Jephthah said that Israel had been living in regions of Palestine for three hundred years. Jephthah lived around 1100 BC, thus dating the end of the wilderness journey and the beginning of the conquest around 1400 BC.

Special Features

The book of Joshua is named for the most famous member of the Israelites in the generation after the death of Moses. The book describes the history of the generation that crossed the Jordan River and entered the promised land of Canaan. Their battles and faithfulness have a place among the greatest stories of faith in the Old Testament. Joshua led the people to defeat the adversaries who opposed God's people. He then oversaw the division of the land into the tribal allotments. Finally, Joshua renewed the covenant between the people and God.

Extended Commentary

Joshua 14:1-15

14:1 Eleazar was the son of Aaron, and his successor as well as the leader of the Levites (Ex 6:23–25; Nm 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 (Nm 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 Nm 26:55–56; 33:54; 34:13; 36:2. The size of the tribe was also considered (Nm 33:54). The lot was not considered arbitrary but was directed by God (Pr 16:33).

14:3–5 This introduction mentions the absence of Levitical lands twice and explicitly anticipates the allotment of towns to that tribe in chap. 21. The absence of the Levites should reduce the number of eligible tribes to eleven, but Joseph's two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, each received a tribal inheritance.

14:6 Judah's relative importance, if only because of its larger size than the other tribes, may give it the right to go first. Caleb was one of the two spies, along with Joshua, who were sent to spy out the promised land and returned with a good report (Nm 13–14). Caleb's designation as a Kenizzite is otherwise unattested, but it may be related to the name of Caleb's brother, Kenaz (15:17).

14:7 Caleb's age of forty at the time of the first spying out of the land puts him with the first generation of Israel who left Egypt. He now spoke to the new generation and recounted what they might not know.

14:8 For Israel to lose heart recalls the defeat at the first assault on Ai (7:5) as well as the Canaanites' fear when they learned of Israel's victories (2:11; 5:1; Ex 15:15). Note the emphasis on Caleb's loyalty (Jos 14:8–9, 14; cp. Nm 14:24; 32:12; Dt 1:36).

14:10 Caleb's reference to forty-five years suggests that following the wilderness wanderings of about forty years, the time spent in the battles of chaps. 1–12 amounted to about five years.

14:11 The ongoing strength of Caleb despite his old age compares with that of Moses (Dt 34:7). He was still capable of fighting for his land and settling on it.

14:12 Caleb had confidence in the Lord and his promises despite the challenges facing him. Perhaps expresses his humility before the Lord.

14:13–14 When the spies searched the land, they traveled its length. However, the description of their activity focused on Hebron and the nearby Valley of Eshcol (Nm 13:22–24). These were located in the southern hill country of Judah. This would have been among the closest major inland towns in Canaan from their base at Kadesh-barnea. Thus the gift of land to Caleb

involved the area of Hebron where he had visited and spent more time than anywhere else (Dt 1:36).

14:15 The note about Hebron's name recalls the mighty Anakim (11:21) who were there, and it anticipates Caleb's defeat of them in 15:14. Kiriath-arba is a second and earlier name for Hebron. The first part of the name means "city"; thus, the note suggests the meaning, "city of Arba," where Arba is the name of the greatest man among the Anakim. This would predate Israel's appearance because none of the Anakim that Caleb fought (15:14) bore this name. The note that the land had rest from war indicates success for Caleb.¹

References

1. Richard S. Hess, "Joshua," in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 344.

Author Bio

Robert Smith Jr. (Exalting Jesus in Joshua)

Robert Smith Jr. is the Dr. Charles T. Carter Baptist Chair of Divinity at Beeson Divinity School, Samford University in Birmingham, AL. He earned his PhD at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has spoken at more than 105 universities, colleges, and seminaries in the United States, Great Britain, and the Caribbean. He and his wife, Wanda, PhD, have four adult children (one in heaven).

Warren Wiersbe (Be Strong)

Warren W. Wiersbe, former pastor of the Moody Church and general director of Back to the Bible, has traveled widely as a Bible teacher and conference speaker. Because of his encouragement to those in ministry, Dr. Wiersbe is often referred to as "the pastor's pastor." He has ministered in churches and conferences throughout the United States as well as in Canada, Central and South America, and Europe. Dr. Wiersbe has written over 150 books, including the popular BE series of commentaries on every book of the Bible, which has sold more than four million copies. At the 2002 Christian Booksellers Convention, he was awarded the Gold Medallion Lifetime Achievement Award by the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association. Dr. Wiersbe and his wife, Betty, live in Lincoln, Nebraska.

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