

Lessons from the Last Tribes

Joshua 19:1-48

Preached by Phillip Kayser at DCC on Sunday, July 14th 2024

When we looked at the land distribution to Benjamin, I gave more than a dozen practical applications from that chapter. And for the most part I won't be repeating those today, even though many of those lessons can also be found in these verses too. But you can see from your outline that there is plenty more that can be applied from this chapter. We won't take a huge amount of time on it today, but I do want you to see (in at least broad strokes) that this is a very applicable chapter.

I. Farmland has value to God and is considered a stewardship trust ("inheritance" vv. 1,2,8,9,10,16,23,31,39,41,48,49,51; See also Gen. 12:7; 13:15; Dan. 4:25; and more than 200 other verses)

One of the most obvious lessons in this chapter is that land has value to God and is considered to be a stewardship trust. And I get that from the word "inheritance." It is described as an "inheritance" from the Lord in thirteen of the verses in this chapter. And I counted over 200 verses elsewhere that describe land as a being a very good gift, an inheritance, and a stewardship trust from God. And since that is such an obvious truth, I won't spend time trying to prove that. Instead, I want to give several implications of this truth that is scattered throughout this chapter.

A. The kingdom of God encompasses everything, not just the invisible (Deut. 10:4; 1 Chron. 29:11; Job 41:11; Ps. 24:1; 50:12; 104:24; 1 Cor. 10:26,28)

First, God's kingdom includes everything, including the land; including your yard. Many people try to spiritualize everything in God's kingdom, and to make pastors more important than farmers or carpenters. But if that was the case, why did Jesus spend the vast bulk of his life in a carpentry business? You don't have to read very far in the Bible to realize that God values land, animals, farm equipment, tools, and physical work. He wants the citizens of His kingdom to consider their farms and all that they have as part of His kingdom. It takes a shift in thinking, but it is such an important shift.

Taking dominion of the soil *is* kingdom work. It really is. God loves it when you try to have the most excellent gardens that you can have, and when you take care of your lawns, trim your trees, fertilize the soil, and subdue the pests. That is every bit as much a service to the Lord as my preaching is. And there are many more Scriptures that prove this than the ones I gave in your outlines. But I think those should be sufficient.

B. But this means that the land must be carefully stewarded before the Lord and not turned into a wilderness (Jer. 22:6; Ezek. 6:14; Hos. 2:3; Zeph. 2:13; cf. Job 12:24; Is. 32:15; 41:18-19; 51:3; etc.)

But secondly, if God can give the land and take away the land from peoples (which he does in this chapter, right?), it implies that God *owns* the land and can dispossess people of the land any time He wants to if we are poor stewards. Land is a stewardship trust and the land must be used as if it belonged to God - because it does. Psalm 24:1 says, “The earth is the LORD’S, and *all* its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein.” When you do your gardening, tell the Lord that you are taking care of it because you love Him and you appreciate and value His good gift.

But this also means that we need to look to His law for *how* to steward *His* land. And the law makes it clear that God doesn’t want land abused by overusing it and burning out the land, and thus He calls for giving the land a sabbath rest and fertilizing the land. Rushdoony’s *Institutes* demonstrate quite well that just as the Sabbath is good for our bodies and souls, the *land* Sabbath-year was intended for the land’s good and for our good as well.

But God doesn’t want the land *underused* either. That’s the error of the Green Movement. The Green Movement wants the state to turn vast tracts of land back into wilderness. But here’s the thing - in many passages (and I’ve included a few of those in your outline) God considers wilderness to be a cursed state, not a blessed state. And when He blesses His people, there are other verses that indicate that He helps His people turn desert and wilderness into productive land once again. *That’s* a blessing.

Nor does God want the land polluted. That’s the opposite extreme of some people who overreact to the Green Movement. E. Calvin Beisner’s books on stewardship of the earth maintain the Biblical balance. God expected Adam and Eve to take dominion of the land and to improve upon it. When you see your house and land as belonging to God, you tend to take better care of it.

C. This helps to explain why the law of God did not allow for any property tax - if the state taxes the land, it claims ownership of the land (Dan. 11:20; Amos 5:11; cf. God’s attitude towards “tax collectors” in Matt. 5:46-47; 9:10-11; 11:19; 18:17; etc).

Another implication of God’s ownership of property is that it limits what the state can do with your property. We will look in a bit at the evil of eminent domain, but God’s ownership also completely rules out property taxes. R. J. Rushdoony words it this way:

...nowhere in the Bible is the state authorized to tax property. Taxation of property is a means of destroying property and is a form of robbery... There was thus no land tax or property tax. Since “the earth is the LORD’S and the fullness thereof” (Ex. 9:29, etc.), a land tax usurps God’s rights and is unlawful. The

purpose of Biblical law with reference to land is to ensure the security of man in his property; a property tax of any kind is a denial of this God-ordained security.¹

And I say, "Amen!" Sadly, the recent effort to do away with property taxes in Nebraska failed. We just didn't have enough traction to get people to know about it. But Senator Eerdman and others will seek to promote the elimination of property taxes through other measures. And I would encourage you to support him in this effort.

The state has robbed farmers in Nebraska of land because they didn't have the money to pay their taxes after three years of failed crops. That's horrible. The bottom line is that we were not designed by God to be serfs who are simply renting land from the state and who can be evicted from the land when they fail to pay their property taxes. It's a great evil. It is one of *many* evidences that the state is acting as if *it* is God. The modern state seems to have no limits to its pretensions - whether Democrat or Republican. And property taxes is just one of many symptoms of the deification of the state.

D. God does not appreciate those who make it impossible to pass on land to their children ("inheritance" [נַחֲלָה] in vv. 4,5,8,9 is defined as "inalienable, hereditary property." cf 1 Sam. 8:14; 1 Kings 21:2-4,16-20; Is. 5:8-10; Mic. 2:2)

The next implication is that God does not appreciate those who make it impossible to pass on the land to their children. The only definition given in the dictionary for the Hebrew word (נַחֲלָה - *nachalah*) translated as "inheritance" here is this one: "inalienable, hereditary property." Let that definition burn into your minds - *God intended the land to be inalienable hereditary property.* every one of those words is important - "inalienable, hereditary property." God uses this Hebrew word 193 times to describe the land. God wanted property to be passed on by the stewards and therefore told the state in many ways to have "hands off." (Biblical economics is one of those many ways, and I won't get into that today.) But it should be enough to know that God was furious with kings who tried to take land from citizens. I'll just give you three examples.

1 Samuel 8:14 gives a definition of an ungodly tyrannical state that God disapproves of, and part of that definition is that the state practices eminent domain. It warns citizens that if they are not careful about who they vote for, those ungodly rulers "will take the best of your fields, your vineyards, and your olive groves, and give them to his servants." Eminent domain was considered an evil thing by the Bible and by America's founding fathers, but it is routinely practiced today.

Here's another example. 1 Kings 21 illustrates the depravity of wicked king Ahab by outlining his attempt to purchase Naboth's property. Just the attempt to *purchase* the land and turn it into state land was considered evil. But when Naboth wasn't willing to sell the

¹ Rousas John Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law, Volume One* (Nutley, NJ): Craig Press, 1973), 492, 493.

land voluntarily, Ahab killed him and took it from him. It reminds me of the cartoon that describes voluntary taxes showing the state with a gun to your head. Yeah, real voluntary.

The next verse shows that eminent domain can take place at the city level. Isaiah 5:8 says, “Woe to those who join house to house; they add field to field, till there is no place where they may dwell alone in the midst of the land.” God never intended for *urban* sprawl to do away with farmland. And in a moment we will deal with *legitimate* urban sprawl and *illegitimate* urban sprawl. But when cities gobble up farmland, God curses them.

But just from what we have covered so far I think you can see that the Bible’s laws on land are practical and were intended for our good. When people throw off the law of God, citizen ownership of land eventually suffers.

E. This chapter illustrates that God’s gift of land was intended for the good of all, not just a few

A fifth implication is that God’s gift of the land was intended for the good of all, not just a few. Indeed, the farms that God gave provided the food for the cities and the cities provided the goods and technologies needed on the farms. There was a mutual benefit. And I didn’t put the Scriptures behind that point because several of the next points richly illustrate this one.

F. This chapter illustrates that the land was owned by families, not by the state

But the last implication of this first point is that God intended the land to be owned by families, not by the state. The only thing that the state is given was boundaries. The state was not given all the land within it’s boundaries; it was only given the boundaries themselves. And that too is significant. If the state did not own the land within the boundaries, it was hugely limited on what it could do internally. And by giving it boundaries, God kept the state from also expanding outward. God didn’t want empire building.

You see, God wanted a small, limited state. He gave boundaries to keep each state in check and to keep it from expanding. Ungodly governments tend to always grow, whereas godly governments stay small. And you might wonder, “How small?” Well, the Regulative Principle of Government means that the state may only do what the Scripture explicitly authorizes it to do. And when I finish my book on Biblical civics next year (Lord willing), you will see that the Biblical state was very close to the modern philosophy of minarchism. Cut about 98% out of today’s government and you might be close.

Well, this is the exact opposite of the wretched solution that Henry George proposed as the solution for poverty way back in the 19th century. His book, *Poverty and Progress* has had a huge influence on promoting statism. He said that the state should own all land and should abolish private property. And you might think, “Huh! He wasn’t successful.” Well, don’t be too sure. If you pay property taxes you really don’t own your land; you rent your land from the government. The civil government has become a landlord. Property taxes was a sleight

of hand giving people the illusion that they own their property, but they really don't. And if you don't believe me, try not paying your taxes and you will find yourself evicted from your own property and your property sold out from under you. This has happened thousands of times.

Anyway, Henry George's solution to poverty is the exact opposite of God's solution. God knew that when the state grows in power, the people will suffer - just as they suffered under the Pharaohs of Egypt. So don't treat this chapter as a boring irrelevant chapter. This chapter illustrates the Pentateuch's underpinnings for private property and capitalism.

II. Towns and cities have value to God (vv. 6-8,15-16,22-23,29-31,35,38-39,48,50; see Numb. 35:2,4,6-8 and 70 other verses)

And the next points deal with the capitalism that God put in place. Towns and cities have value to God too. Indeed, God considered cities to be even *more* important (Oh, Oh - here's where I'm going to get into trouble; but it is true - God considered cities to be even *more* important) to the well-being of the nation than the land around the cities was. Let me expand on that.

Where land is mentioned 75 times in Joshua, the word "cities" occurs 130 times and the word *villages* another 31 times. In this chapter alone, the words "city," "village," and "town" are mentioned 28 times, and of course the *names* of the cities are given even more times than that. And each of those cities within the boundaries of Israel were said to be a good gift from God.

You see, not everyone would be gifted to work on a farm. God's plan was for each tribe to have its cities absolutely teeming with people. Look at verses 6-8.

Josh. 19:6 Beth Lebaoth, and Sharuhem: thirteen cities and their villages; 7 Ain, Rimmon, Ether, and Ashan: four cities and their villages; 8 and all the villages that were all around these cities as far as Baalath Beer, Ramah of the South. This was the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Simeon according to their families.

Notice that these cities and villages are also called an inheritance of families. It's a gift of God. And that concept is repeated for each tribe.

From the early chapters of Genesis to the book of Revelation, cities are seen as being the *primary* centers of cultural development and as providing the *primary* means for expanding the cultural mandate. That's not an exaggeration. Cities are ultra important. I know I'm going to get pushback on this, but the Bible treats cities as being ultra important. A biblical theology of cities shows that if the cities prospered, the whole land prospered - including the farmers. I think a couple of examples from many similar verses should be sufficient to demonstrate this.

Jeremiah 29:7 says, "And seek the welfare of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the LORD for it; for in its welfare you will have welfare." And the word "welfare" is "shalom" and is translated in several different ways, all of which speak to

wholeness and blessing. Now, it is true that the Bible *also* warns that cities *can* result in promoting a culture of concentrated evil. *But that's why God's people were to seek the welfare of the city, to pray for the city, and to seek to influence the city.* Cities result in either concentrated good or concentrated evil, and if Christians abandon cities and stop influencing cities, there will *automatically* be a slide into concentrated evil. And we are seeing that in some of the cities of America, aren't we? But in a righteous society, cities can also result in unparalleled good.

Consider Psalm 107:4-8. It says,

"4 They wandered in the wilderness in a desolate way; they found no city to dwell in. 5 Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. 6 Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses. 7 And He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city for a dwelling place. 8 Oh, that men would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness, And for His wonderful works to the children of men!"

In a previous sermon I have pointed out that the reciprocal relationship of farms to cities is *foundational* to capitalism and to the prosperity of the country as a whole. *Both* are needed. And it makes logical sense since not every son can inherit the family farm. They simply can't. If every generation divided up the farm among *all* of the children, eventually the family farm would be so divided up that it would be the size of a postage stamp. It is mathematically *impossible* for every descendant of farmers to be farmers. God *forced* division of labor and the resultant capitalism by making most descendants move *off* of the farms and *into* villages and cities. This resulted in the phenomenon we call industrialization. It isn't a bad thing. But since I already spoke to that before, I won't say more on that in this sermon.

III. The presence of urban sprawl (cities and their villages) and the relationship between village and city (vv. 6-8,15-16,22-23,30-31,38-39,48)

The next point deals with urban sprawl and the relationship between village and city. Verse 24 says "twelve cities with *their* villages." These were not stand-alone villages, but villages connected jurisdictionally to cities. Verse 28 says the same thing - that certain villages were attached jurisdictionally to cities. They *belonged* to the cities. He did that to enable *legitimate* urban sprawl and to avoid *illegitimate* urban sprawl.

Elsewhere in Scripture we find that not all villages were attached to cities. Leviticus 25:31 says that when unwallled villages were not directly connected to a city, they are just treated as being part of the country. They were on their own and could have their own village council. Let me read that:

However the houses of villages which have no wall around them shall be counted as the fields of the country. They may be redeemed, and they shall be released in the Jubilee." (Lev. 25:31)

In other words, houses in the country and in the villages were not able to be permanently sold - at least not until they became a bonafide city. They could only be leased to a stranger until the year of Jubilee, at which time they reverted back to the family that had leased it out. After the year of Jubilee the family could decide whether they wanted to lease it out again. It remained under their control even if they didn't farm it. In any case, this kept urban sprawl of the big cities somewhat in check. You see, in cities, houses could be bought and sold at will. Mark Bartusch says,

(Lev. 25:29–31) also makes a distinction between houses within walled cities and those in villages: a house within a city, once sold, could only be redeemed within a period of one year. A house in a village, however, could always be redeemed.²

Merrill Unger points out that as villages and towns grew in population, they could become independent cities with their own government. This was the case of Bethlehem, which was originally just a village (John 7:42) and later became a city (Luke 2:4). So right from the beginning, God ensured that cities would have room for growth by having different rules for the villages and towns tied to the protection of the city. This protected the country from having city governments expanding their reach in a tyrannical way. It's not just federal and state governments that can become tyrannical; cities can too. So God arranged the relationships of these entities in such a way so as to keep maximum liberty alive, and yet to still allow the cities to flourish. And even if there isn't a one-to-one correspondence between Israel's set-up and America's set-up, there are still principles that can apply.

IV. The importance of storing title

The next thing that I see in this section is the importance of storing title deed to the properties you own and preserving them for the next generation. Some of this chapter may be boring reading for you, but it would have been considered ultra important to the tribes, clans, and families who got title to specific portions of land. Twelves times it mentions that each family got specific portions in either land, village, town, or city. And each of those portions was an inheritance. So these boring readings amount to a legal property boundary description and title deed that was preserved.

An interesting example of property deeds being an act of faith is in Jeremiah 32, where Jeremiah bought land that was already occupied by the Babylonians, and then hid the title deed in a sealed pot so that when the Israelites came back into the land, this paperwork would be able to prove his family's ownership that would be passed on. Since they were going to be in exile for 70 years, that amounted to long-term thinking.

² Mark W. Bartusch, *Understanding Dan: An Exegetical Study of a Biblical City, Tribe and Ancestor*, vol. 379, *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), 87, footnote 38.

Thinking longterm about property is an important aspect of faith. It's yet another example of how much God values the land.³

But all that we have said so far also illustrates how important it is to steward your belongings in a way that they will benefit future generations even after you are dead. Don't be selfish in your use of the things God has put into your hands. Think about future generations. Do you have a multi-generational perspective on land? It's important to at least think about that.

V. Random lessons from the last tribes to get land

But let me move on to some random lessons the Lord has impressed upon me from the descriptions of the boundaries given to each of these last tribes.

A. The "lot" (vv. 1,10,17,24,32,40,51) is a symbol of God's sovereignty

After doing the outline I noticed that I had already preached on the subject of the "lot" in chapter 15 and the many lessons on God's sovereignty that are illustrated, so I will skip that point altogether today. But I do want to end by giving at least some other applications from each of the remaining tribes that received land in this chapter.

B. Lesson from Simeon - God brings a blessing out of a curse (19:1-9 with Gen. 49:5-7)

1. Background

And we will begin with Simeon in verses 1-9. Several commentaries point out that even though these verses reflect a curse that God pronounced upon Simeon more than four hundred years earlier, God actually brought a blessing out of that curse. Let me explain.

Simeon had no state borders. That was a literal application of the curse. Only cities and villages were given to Simeon. In fact, verse 1 explicitly says that "their inheritance was within the inheritance of Judah." And verse 9 says, "The inheritance of the children of Simeon was included in the share of the children of Judah, for the share of the children of Judah was too much for them. Therefore the children of Simeon had their inheritance

³ David Jackman says, "For us in the western world the title deeds to the property we own or the lease agreement on the home we rent are hugely important legal items. They may make for mundane and rather boring reading, but we make sure that they are carefully stored and preserved as indisputable proof of what is rightly ours. That gives us some perspective on why these chapters mattered so much to Israel and to each tribe, clan, and family group. Here are the title deeds to the family inheritance, written down and authorized by their appearance in the Holy Scriptures, the reference point of indisputable authority for any controversies that might occur in the generations to come." David Jackman, *Joshua: People of God's Purpose*, ed. R. Kent Hughes, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 137.

within the inheritance of that people.” Chapter 15 lists these cities of Simeon as being under the state jurisdiction of Judah. The cities are occupied by Simeonites, but they are cities of Judah. What’s going on?

Well, this is almost identical to what happened to Levi. Levi had no territory of its own, but instead occupied farms, houses, villages, and cities within other tribes. We will look at that in chapters 20 and 21.

If you turn to Genesis 49, you will see why. Both Simeon and Levi, the sons of Jacob, engaged in sins that negatively impacted their descendants. Genesis 49, beginning to read at verse 5.

5 Simeon and Levi are brothers; Instruments of cruelty are in their dwelling place.
6 Let not my soul enter their council; let not my honor be united to their assembly; for in their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they hamstrung an ox. 7 Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce; and their wrath, for it is cruel! I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel.

And that is exactly what happened to the descendants of Simeon and Levi. Because the ancestors had uncontrolled anger, bitterness, and cruelty, their descendants suffered for it. Neither tribe received any tribal territory. Levites were scattered into every tribe, city, and even hamlet of Israel, and Simeonites were scattered far from each other in various cities of Judah. Some of them would later migrate to other places. But neither tribe had a state homeland. What can we learn from this?

2. Sins of parents can negatively impact descendants

First, we can learn that our individual sins as parents *can* negatively impact our descendants. If you are convinced that your angry outbursts could have a negative impact upon your great grandchildren, it might motivate you to work on your anger - or on your other sins. Because all humans are covenantally connected, no sin is just *my* sin. My sins impact my descendants unless I have repented of them, or unless they explicitly cut those impacts off. And there is a process you go through to cut off the sins of your ancestors.

3. The children are not bound by their ancestor’s bad decisions

And that’s the next sub-point. Don’t assume that you are completely bound by your ancestors’ bad decisions. You can break the curse for your nuclear family and for your own descendants through the blood of Christ. In this case, the curse of not owning land eventually became a blessing. God turned a curse into a blessing. Simeon’s industry ended up hugely blessing Judah, and Simeon actually ended up being faithful to the Lord (like Levi was) and they were not deported by Assyria when the Assyrians conquered the northern tribes.

4. Consider the humility of Judah

The last lesson with regard to Simeon was that it took humility on the part of Judah to allow all of these Simeonite cities to be part of their territory. One author said,

Just as the Judahites willingly and humbly accepted the Simeonites into their territory, so we must willingly and humbly accept the lowly and needy of this world. We must humbly give to, look after, and take care of those who have need. Arrogance, pride, and haughtiness have no place before God.⁴

C. Zebulun (vv. 10-16)

Let's move on to Zebulun in verses 10-16. There are three lessons that I see in these verses.

1. They were on the sea and engaged in international trade, ship building, fishing, finance, evangelism, and (through diversification) enriched the nation (see Gen. 49:13; Deut. 33:18-19)

First, Zebulun illustrates the benefits to Israel that resulted from *further* diversification. We've already seen *some* diversification, but this goes beyond that. I love the realism and practicality of the Scripture. Because of Zebulun's location on the Mediterranean coast, they engaged in international trade, ship building, fishing, finance, and evangelism. Some modern maps have Zebulun landlocked, but Josephus is quite clear that Zebulun's land went from the Sea of Galilee to the Mediterranean.⁵

And of course, much of this had been prophesied more than four hundred years earlier. God had promised in Genesis 49:13, "'Zebulun shall dwell by the haven of the sea; he shall become a haven for ships, and his border shall adjoin Sidon.'" Sidon was already an international trade hub. And the international trade by which Zebulun enriched and prospered the rest of the nation cannot be overestimated. They were ship builders, traders, engaged in international finance, and in other ways fulfilled that prophecy and the one in Deuteronomy 33:18-19.

Let me read the verses from Deuteronomy one clause at a time. Verse 18 of Deuteronomy 33 says, "And of Zebulun he said: Rejoice, Zebulun, in your going out..." God commanded them to rejoice in their going out of their territory. And God is referring to Zebulun's involvement in the international sea-faring trade. Why could they rejoice in that?

First, their international relations would result in evangelism. The next verse says, "They shall call the peoples to the mountain [that's mount Zion, where the temple was. So it talks about the citizens of Zebulun and it says, "They shall call the peoples to the mountain"]; there they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness." So he is talking about Zebulun engaging in evangelism among the Gentiles because of their vast international contacts. Their

⁴ Leadership Ministries Worldwide, *The Book of Joshua, The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible* (Chattanooga, TN: Leadership Ministries Worldwide, 2003), 185.

⁵ Josephus says "The tribe of Zebulun's lot included the land which lay as far as the Lake of Genesareth [Sea of Galilee], and that which belonged to Carmel and the sea [Mediterranean]" (*Antiquities*, 5.1.22). He was there, and would have known better than modern liberal scholars who claim that the boundaries are not totally known. Josephus says that they were.

geography kept them from ever being stuck in a rut, and various commentaries point out that this flexibility made them some of the best missionaries before the time of Christ - and even in the time of Christ. So it was not by accident that 11 of the twelve disciples of Jesus came from Galilee, within the jurisdiction of Zebulun. Their very geography helped to shape them into good evangelists.

But the next phrase in the prophecy says, “For they shall partake of the abundance of the seas and of treasures hidden in the sand.” Craigie says on that verse,

The source of their prosperity would be found in the seas (in fishing, maritime commerce, etc.) and at the seashores (in shellfish; dye, made from shellfish; glass, made from sand).⁶

But there may be more. Mayes⁷ believes that the reference to the sand is to caravan routes from the neighboring desert countries, thus bringing in wealth from sea and land.

But my main point in bringing this up is to caution us to not think that being a farmer is God’s only vocation. God authorizes an enormous variety of trades and occupations. It is precisely the diversification of industry that causes a country to advance. Some of the poorest most backward nations in the world are nations that are strictly agricultural. Diversification is absolutely essential to the prosperity of a nation. We need the farms; we need the cities.

2. We shouldn’t settle for less (vv. 10-16 contra Judges 1:30)

But lest you get the impression that Zebulun did nothing but good, let me read Judges 1:30. It says,

Nor did Zebulun drive out the inhabitants of Kitron or the inhabitants of Nahalol; so the Canaanites dwelt among them, and were put under tribute.

In other words, instead of obeying God’s mandate of total conquest, they decided they would make money off of the Canaanites and let them stick around; they put the Canaanites under tribute.⁸ Hey, why not make money off of them? Right? They were good capitalists, right? And the answer is, no they were not. God considered them *bad* capitalists on *that* particular move.

And they weren’t the only ones to settle for less than what God wanted. But in their case, as a result of *that generation* doing so, their descendants were constantly harrassed by the Canaanites. We need to realize that it is not always the generation that compromises that gets hammered with the bad results. If there was always an *instant* bad result to our

⁶ Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1976), 399.

⁷ Mayes, A. D. H. *Deuteronomy*. NIBC. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981, p. 407.

⁸ For more information, see David M. Howard Jr., *Joshua*, vol. 5, * (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 368–369.

ungodly decisions, very few people would make bad decisions. But God wants us to live by faith, so He often postpones implementing the negative consequences. So Zebulun illustrates how easy it is for Christians to settle for less than what God desires of us. And that never turns out well.

3. Later generations can break out of bad habits (Judges 5:18; 1 Chron. 12:23,33)

But the next lesson from Zebulun is encouraging. It shows that later generations eventually broke out of the bad habits they had inherited from their ancestors. We aren't told how, but I think we can safely assume that it was because they cut off the sins of their ancestors. Praise God! Though this generation of Zebulunites disobeyed God's orders on warfare, later generations somehow changed. They later became some of the most brave, daring, and skilled warriors in Israel. Under Deborah and later under David they were amazing soldiers who risked their lives fighting for the Lord. And I find that so encouraging. Your ancestors do not have to dictate your future! Praise God!

D. Issachar (vv. 17-23)

Issachar is next. That's verses 17-23. And the main lesson from Issachar is that grace often reverses what nature might expect. Zebulun got a far greater inheritance than Issachar. Issachar was the older brother of Zebulun and you would have expected him to receive a choicer inheritance. But God in His sovereign grace often reverses things like that. But to give perspective, those who are chosen are all equally unworthy of God's grace, so we cannot complain, can we? Instead, we should all rejoice that God chose us at all. But God did reward the zeal of Zebulun with a greater inheritance. Jesus said that those who are faithful with the physical and financial things God has given us will be rewarded with more. Let me read how He worded it in Luke 16.

Luke 16:9 "And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home. 10 He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much. 11 Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? 12 And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who will give you what is your own?"

E. Asher (vv. 24-31)

I will only mention one city under Asher's jurisdiction. It's the city of Cabul in verse 27. This was one of twenty cities from the Galilee region that Solomon gave to king Hiram of Tyre in exchange for building supplies for the temple. That was not a cool thing that Solomon did. For one thing, it was unlawful. He had no Biblical authority to do that; but he did it anyway. But for another thing, Solomon was being a cheapskate. King Hiram was not at all impressed, saying to Solomon, "What kind of cities are these which you have given me, my brother?" and the text goes on to say that king Hiram called the whole region Cabul, which means "good for nothing." He was no doubt naming the whole region after this chief city of

Cabul, but by using that name he was saying that the whole region was good for nothing.⁹ And there are three lessons we can learn from this. And I didn't put these into your outline.

The first lesson is that modern times show that what was previously thought to be good for nothing land can (with industry) be turned into marvelous property. And it was. But without dominion things that are worthless will stay worthless. When God has gifted you with something that you do not consider impressive, ask God for wisdom on how to bring much good out of it. If it is a gift of God, it was intended for good.

The second lesson is that when ancestors fail to value something, it is hard to change that perspective with subsequent generations. Our vision of what can or can't be done is often picked up by the next generation. God considered it a good gift, but neither Asher, Solomon, or Hiram did. They all considered this heritage to be good for nothing. Be careful what you put down. Your kids may very well pick up on your negative attitudes.

The third lesson is that Solomon had no right to give any portion of Israel to another country since the word "inheritance" means that God intended this to be passed on to the descendants of Asher. So that speaks to the fact that later in life Solomon began moving away from his godly views of limited government and he became proud, tyrannical, and started becoming more statist and centralized in his leanings. Even good kings can fail to treat what God has given with a good stewardship trust. Don't ever take stewardship for granted; we must always work at it self-consciously.

F. Naphtali (vv. 32-39)

For the sake of time, I will only mention one lesson from Naphtali, and that is that rather than destroying the fortified cities mentioned in verse 38, God allowed Naphtali to inherit them. And they did make good use of the enemy's technologies to thwart advances of pagan nations from the north. You can tell from the map of Israel that Asher, Naphtali, and at least the later location for Dan were the first line of defense against the northern aggression of Assyria, Babylon, and other northern nations. The military can be a legitimate force for the defense of a nation that the Lord is willing to bless. I'm not against militaries; I'm just against military expansionism that is unauthorized by God. But the main point is that it is OK to plunder the technologies of the pagans and use them for righteousness. I love technology. I love computers. I love advancements in science. Christians can use pagan technology for good purposes.

G. Dan (vv. 40-48)

But let's move on to the last tribe. God gave the final tribe, Dan, a very significant territory in the south. If you look up the cities, you will see that Dan's allotment was not in the north at all. As you can see from the two maps in your outline, what God gave to Dan was in the south, surrounded by Ephraim and Benjamin on the north and east, and by Judah in the south. So why on earth does the bottom map list Dan way up north? The answer to that

⁹ David M. Howard Jr., Joshua, vol. 5, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 373, footnote 215.

question is only hinted at in verse 17, but is expanded upon in Judges 18. And it is a sordid tale.

Leshem (sometimes called Laish) was most definitely *not* a city given to them by the Lord. In fact, that city lies completely outside the boundaries that God allowed *any* of the tribes to conquer. Judges describes the occupants of Leshem or Laish as being a peaceful people who minded their own business. They were *not* under God's curse. This means that Dan not only abandoned God's call upon them to settle territory in the south (*that was to be their inheritance*), but they also stole an inheritance that did not belong to them, and they also engaged in murder of the people they conquered since God had not authorized that conquest. Any killing that God does not authorize is by definition, murder. The Bible indicates that when a country engages in wars of aggression that He Himself does not authorize, that *country* is guilty of murder.

And I believe America has been engaged in massive murder in most of the wars that we have unbiblically and unconstitutionally entered into in the last 100 years. In fact, like Dan's war, most of America's wars have been undeclared wars. Even the government websites admit that there have only been 11 official declarations of war in America's history,¹⁰ with the six declarations of war in World War II being the last. Now here is the thing: the constitution gives power to declare war to Congress alone.¹¹ And Congress has not declared war since 1942. Yet America has been involved in 47 full-scale wars, and numerous deadly attacks on nations that are *not* official wars. As one scholar worded it, "America is addicted to undeclared wars." American presidents have employed military forces without authorization of Congress at least 125 times according to official records, though the Federation of American Scientists has catalogued almost 200 military incursions in which America was the aggressor since World War II. Citizens have not even been aware of many of those bloody attacks. You can disagree with me (you are always welcome to disagree with me if you think I am being unbiblical), but it is my opinion (based on the Bible) that America has a lot of blood on our hands. Our nation has a lot more to repent of than Dan did. Let's look at Dan's ungodly war. It's kid's play compared to what America has done. And I believe that America needs to call for a time of prayer and fasting and repentance for our wars of aggression.

Dan didn't like the allotment that God gave to them, so they completely abandoned their only God-given jurisdiction and went way north, attacking Leshem, killing peaceful citizens, and occupying territory that God had never given to them, and making most of Dan's

¹⁰ The only constitutionally declared wars America has fought in were the war of 1812, the Mexican-American War, the Spanish-American War of 1895, two declarations of war in World War I against Germany and against Austria-Hungary, and six declarations of war in World War II, amounting to a grand total of 11 official declarations of War. Since the declaration of war against the Axis-allied nations of Hungary, Bulgaria, and Romania, no declarations of war have been given to justify any of America's wars.

¹¹ Article one, section eight of the Constitution says, "Congress shall have power to... declare War." No such powers were given to the president.

citizens also guilty by implication. And I say “most” because there are hints that not all of Dan’s citizens went along with this.

Judges 18 explicitly connects this war of aggression together with the fact that the Danite soldiers who did the conquest had apostatized, worshiped an idol, stole from a fellow-Israelite with threat of violence, and engaged in other sins with a high hand. Did this mean that every Danite followed suit? No. There appears to have been citizens that remained faithful to the Lord and did not join in these atrocities. But it appears that it was only a tiny minority who ended up assimilating into other tribes. David Firth explains the potential future consequences of stepping outside of God’s will that are illustrated in this history. He says of Dan,

The city [of Leshem] itself appears to be outside the territory Yahweh had promised. If so, then Dan compounded their failure to take their allotment by initiating a war against a people who did not stand under Yahweh’s judgment. Although Dan would then function as the northernmost point of Israel, it seems that through this they began a history of sin that would shape their life from that point on, indicating how easy it is for sin to become an entrenched pattern in whole communities. In the West today we often treat sin in a highly individualized way, but the reality seen here is that sin can also be communal. When this happens it forms in the life of that community deep roots which only the gospel can change...¹²

And the Gospel *can* completely cleanse a nation of its guilt, but there must be official repentance and acceptance of the Gospel. The Gospel was repeatedly offered to Dan, but Dan refused it, and God eventually dispensed with that tribe. Why do I say that? Well, read the book of Revelation. The book of Revelation shows Dan completely missing. In that book God was raising up a mighty missionary army from all the *other* tribes, but the tribe of Dan was completely missing from Revelation’s accounting of those who were sealed. It was forever wiped off the face of the map. You see, apart from repentance, there is no hope for tribes and nations.

I am so thankful that the state of Tennessee has called for 30 days of prayer and fasting calling upon Jesus Christ (and yes, Jesus is named in that document that was signed by the legislature, senate, and the governor of Tennessee - appealing to Jesus Christ) to forgive them for their sins against His Word and to forgive them for the corruption that has overtaken civil government. It is *that* explicit. Pray that the churches and citizens of Tennessee would take that call seriously and engage in repentance and prayer and fasting. It’s one of the most encouraging developments that I have seen recently. I’ve got a copy with me if you want to see it. But it is my prayer that other states would follow suit in seeking God’s mercy in the name of Jesus.

But in summary, Joshua 19 illustrates that we cannot take blessings for granted. Each generation must press into the Lord and seek to pursue their calling with all their heart. I

¹² David G. Firth, *The Message of Joshua*, ed. Alec Motyer and Derek Tidball, *The Bible Speaks Today* (Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2015), 180–181.

am encouraged that God is raising up a remnant in America who is doing just that. In fact, the darker things are getting in America, the more Christians God is raising up who have a solid Reformed and Reconstructionist worldview, a trust in His grace, and a vision for the future - perhaps more than I have seen in my entire lifetime. And I suspect that God would not raise up that many godly Christians who are pushing back against the ungodliness in our culture and who are making clear the antithesis unless God was planning to do something great. At least that is my prayer. *But whether America repents or falls under God's judgment is irrelevant to whether we as individuals can take heed to this message and receive God's blessing.* We can. But we must take God's calling upon our lives seriously. May that be so, Lord Jesus. Amen.

Duane L. Christensen, Deuteronomy 21:10–34:12, vol. 6B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), xli.