

JOSHUA—WEEK 12

TRUST



F. Michael Slay

A DEEP Study

The Fellowship of Ailbe

Joshua, Week 12 — Trust

*The Cover Picture is by Jean Fouquet (1420–1477)
On display in Paris at the Bibliotheque nationale de France.*

The Israelis finally finish going into the land and dividing it up. They cast lots to do this. The process is amazingly civil. The sons of Dan get the last share, and yet their share is prime real estate.

Israel's faith in this process is commendable.

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1 Joshua 18:1–10

Now the whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled together at Shiloh, and set up the tabernacle of meeting there. And the land was subdued before them. But there remained among the children of Israel seven tribes which had not yet received their inheritance.

Then Joshua said to the children of Israel: “How long will you neglect to go and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers has given you? Pick out from among you three men for each tribe, and I will send them; they shall rise and go through the land, survey it according to their inheritance, and come back to me. And they shall divide it into seven parts. Judah shall remain in their territory on the south, and the house of Joseph shall remain in their territory on the north. You shall therefore survey the land in seven parts and bring the survey here to me, that I may cast lots for you here before the LORD our God. But the Levites have no part among you, for the priesthood of the LORD is their inheritance. And Gad, Reuben, and half the tribe of Manasseh have received their inheritance beyond the Jordan on the east, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave them.”

Then the men arose to go away; and Joshua charged those who went to survey the land, saying, “Go, walk through the land, survey it, and come back to me, that I may cast lots for you here before the LORD in Shiloh.” So the men went, passed through the land, and wrote the survey in a book in seven parts by cities; and they came to Joshua at the camp in Shiloh. Then Joshua cast lots for them in Shiloh before the LORD, and there Joshua divided the land to the children of Israel according to their divisions.

What is up with the Israelites neglecting to go and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers has given you?

They’ve done the hard part. *And the land was subdued before them.* Why sit on their hands now?

There is no “why.” This happens though. Jesus commanded His disciples to take the gospel to the ends of the earth. You’d think the apostles would obey this command.

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,” — Matthew 28:19a

Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith. — Acts 6:7

At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. — Acts 8:1b

The apostles stayed in Jerusalem even after everyone else was scattered by persecution.

We like to think that the great sins are doing things that are wrong or harmful. But scripture condemns sitting on our hands. That should give us pause. Might inaction be just as bad?

What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? — James 2:14 (ESV)

2 Joshua 18:11–28 (ESV)

The lot of the tribe of the people of Benjamin according to its clans came up, and the territory allotted to it fell between the people of Judah and the people of Joseph. On the north side their boundary began at the Jordan. Then the boundary goes up to the shoulder north of Jericho, then up through the hill country westward, and it ends at the wilderness of Beth-aven. From there the boundary passes along southward in the direction of Luz, to the shoulder of Luz (that is, Bethel), then the boundary goes down to Ataroth-addar, on the mountain that lies south of Lower Beth-horon. Then the boundary goes in another direction, turning on the western side southward from the mountain that lies to the south, opposite Beth-horon, and it ends at Kiriath-baal (that is, Kiriath-jearim), a city belonging to the people of Judah. This forms the western side. And the southern side begins at the outskirts of Kiriath-jearim. And the boundary goes from there to Ephron, to the spring of the waters of Nephtoah. Then the boundary goes down to the border of the mountain that overlooks the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, which is at the north end of the Valley of Rephaim. And it then goes down the Valley of Hinnom, south of the shoulder of the Jebusites, and downward to En-rogel. Then it bends in a northerly direction going on to En-shemesh, and from there goes to Geliloth, which is opposite the ascent of Adummim. Then it goes down to the stone of Bohan the son of Reuben, and passing on to the north of the shoulder of Beth-arabah it goes down to the Arabah. Then the boundary passes on to the north of the shoulder of Beth-hoglah. And the boundary ends at the northern bay of the Salt Sea, at the south end of the Jordan: this is the southern border. The Jordan forms its boundary on the eastern side. This is the inheritance of the people of Benjamin, according to their clans, boundary by boundary all around.

Now the cities of the tribe of the people of Benjamin according to their clans were Jericho, Beth-hoglah, Emek-keziz, Beth-arabah, Zemaraim, Bethel, Avvim, Parah, Ophrah, Chephar-ammoni, Ophni, Geba—twelve cities with their villages: Gibeon, Ramah, Beeroth, Mizpeh, Chephirah, Mozah, Rekem, Irpeel, Taralah, Zela, Haeleph, Jebus (that is, Jerusalem), Gibeah and Kiriath-jearim—fourteen cities with their villages. This is the inheritance of the people of Benjamin according to its clans.

This division of land is somehow done by casting lots. It is unclear exactly what these lots looked like. The first method of casting lots mentioned in the Bible is the Urim and Thummim.

And you shall put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim, and they shall be over Aaron's heart when he goes in before the LORD. — Exodus 28:30a

But the Urim and Thummim appear to be a binary, black-or-white type of decision maker. Urim was apparently white, Thummim black. Here we see that the lots were able to specifically say that *the territory allotted to it [Benjamin] fell between the people of Judah and the people of Joseph.*

The lots used to divide the land must have been very intricate.

But what's really important is that casting lots leaves the decision up to God, who controls all things.

The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD. — Proverbs 16:33

3 Joshua 19:1–23 (ESV)

The second lot came out for Simeon, for the tribe of the people of Simeon, according to their clans, and their inheritance was in the midst of the inheritance of the people of Judah. And they had for their inheritance Beersheba, Sheba, Moladah, Hazar-shual, Balah, Ezem, Eltolad, Bethul, Hormah, Ziklag, Beth-marcaboth, Hazar-susah, Beth-lebaoth, and Sharuhem—thirteen cities with their villages; Ain, Rimmon, Ether, and Ashan—four cities with their villages, together with all the villages around these cities as far as Baalath-beer, Ramah of the Negeb. This was the inheritance of the tribe of the people of Simeon according to their clans. The inheritance of the people of Simeon formed part of the territory of the people of Judah. Because the portion of the people of Judah was too large for them, the people of Simeon obtained an inheritance in the midst of their inheritance.

The third lot came up for the people of Zebulun, according to their clans. And the territory of their inheritance reached as far as Sarid. Then their boundary goes up westward and on to Mareal and touches Dabbesheth, then the brook that is east of Jokneam. From Sarid it goes in the other direction eastward toward the sunrise to the boundary of Chisloth-tabor. From there it goes to Daberath, then up to Japhia. From there it passes along on the east toward the sunrise to Gath-hepher, to Eth-kazin, and going on to Rimmon it bends toward Neah, then on the north the boundary turns about to Hannathon, and it ends at the Valley of Iphtahel; and Kattath, Nahalal, Shimron, Idalah, and Bethlehem—twelve cities with their villages. This is the inheritance of the people of Zebulun, according to their clans—these cities with their villages.

The fourth lot came out for Issachar, for the people of Issachar, according to their clans. Their territory included Jezreel, Chesulloth, Shunem, Hapharaim, Shion, Anaharath, Rabbith, Kishion, Ebez, Remeth, En-gannim, En-haddah, Beth-pazzez. The boundary also touches Tabor, Shahazumah, and Beth-shemesh, and its boundary ends at the Jordan—sixteen cities with their villages. This is the inheritance of the tribe of the people of Issachar, according to their clans—the cities with their villages.

This time “the lot” says something that surely surprised everyone. *The second lot came out for Simeon, for the tribe of the people of Simeon, according to their clans, and their inheritance was in the midst of the inheritance of the people of Judah.*

This is curious; Judah already has their allotment. Now, some of that is to be taken away and given to Simeon (see the map linked below). How is that even possible?

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twelve_Tribes_of_Israel#/media/File:12_Tribes_of_Israel_Map.svg

We aren’t told. It’s just that when the lot speaks, that’s the final answer. To the modern mind, it’s astonishing that we don’t hear a word of complaint from anyone about this.

They trust the process absolutely.

We live in a world of second guessing and appeals. Instant replay has introduced appeals into sports. Some folks even think they can appeal God’s choice of whether they are born male or female. Yikes.

4 Joshua 19:24–48 (ESV)

The fifth lot came out for the tribe of the people of Asher according to their clans. Their territory included Helkath, Hali, Beten, Achshaph, Allammelech, Amad, and Mishal. On the west it touches Carmel and Shihor-libnath, then it turns eastward, it goes to Beth-dagon, and touches Zebulun and the Valley of Iphtahel northward to Beth-emek and Neiel. Then it continues in the north to Cabul, Ebron, Rehob, Hammon, Kanah, as far as Sidon the Great. Then the boundary turns to Ramah, reaching to the fortified city of Tyre. Then the boundary turns to Hosah, and it ends at the sea; Mahalab, Achzib, Ummah, Aphek and Rehob—twenty-two cities with their villages. This is the inheritance of the tribe of the people of Asher according to their clans—these cities with their villages.

The sixth lot came out for the people of Naphtali, for the people of Naphtali, according to their clans. And their boundary ran from Heleph, from the oak in Zaanannim, and Adami-nekeb, and Jabneel, as far as Lakkum, and it ended at the Jordan. Then the boundary turns westward to Aznoth-tabor and goes from there to Hukkuk, touching Zebulun at the south and Asher on the west and Judah on the east at the Jordan. The fortified cities are Ziddim, Zer, Hammath, Rakkath, Chinnereth, Adamah, Ramah, Hazor, Kedesh, Edrei, En-hazor, Yiron, Migdal-el, Horem, Beth-anath, and Beth-shemesh—nineteen cities with their villages. This is the inheritance of the tribe of the people of Naphtali according to their clans—the cities with their villages.

The seventh lot came out for the tribe of the people of Dan, according to their clans. And the territory of its inheritance included Zorah, Eshtaol, Ir-shemesh, Shaalabbin, Aijalon, Ithlah, Elon, Timnah, Ekron, Eltekeh, Gibbethon, Baalath, Jehud, Bene-berak, Gath-rimmon, and Me-jarkon and Rakkon with the territory over against Joppa. When the territory of the people of Dan was lost to them, the people of Dan went up and fought against Leshem, and after capturing it and striking it with the sword they took possession of it and settled in it, calling Leshem, Dan, after the name of Dan their ancestor. This is the inheritance of the tribe of the people of Dan, according to their clans—these cities with their villages.

Asher and Naphtali get good-sized plots up north.

But, as it turns out, much of their allocation is no longer part of Israel. About 2/3 of their allocation is now in modern Lebanon. Then again, everything east of the Jordan River is now part of modern Jordan, so the fate of the Asher and Naphtali allotment is anything but unique.

Last comes the tribe of Dan. You might think they'd get slim pickings, but that's not how this allocation by lot works. Dan gets some very nice Mediterranean coastline, including what is now southern Tel Aviv.

Mediterranean beaches are the best.

Dan's mother was a slave. Ancient civilizations were very discriminatory. Yet, if the descendants of Ephraim and Benjamin want to have a holiday at the sea, they have to rent beach houses from the descendants of Dan.

This is millennia ahead of its time. It just screams glory to God.

5 Joshua 19:49–51

When they had made an end of dividing the land as an inheritance according to their borders, the children of Israel gave an inheritance among them to Joshua the son of Nun. According to the word of the LORD they gave him the city which he asked for, Timnath Serah in the mountains of Ephraim; and he built the city and dwelt in it.

These were the inheritances which Eleazar the priest, Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel divided as an inheritance by lot in Shiloh before the LORD, at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. So they made an end of dividing the country.

When all is said and done, the Israelites give Joshua the city he wants. Seems reasonable given all he has done, but we aren't told how this was decided or by whom. This one was not done by lot.

The remarkable thing here is that none of the dividing of the land was done through any kind of power struggle. The tribes simply let *Eleazar the priest, Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel* cast lots to decide who gets what.

The leaders just stood there and watched the lots decide their fate. There was some complaining from the sons of Joseph (in Joshua 17:14) but that got them nowhere and they let it drop.

Then, at the end, someone just decided that Joshua could have this city he wanted and everyone was fine with that. This gets back to the theme of everyone trusting the process—and all seems amazingly friendly and unified. Something special is going on. They have something we don't normally see.

Actually, it's not something special they have; it's something they don't have—suspicion. Everyone trusts the allotment and the people making it. If we tried to do something important with a process like this, there'd be a riot. Everyone would smell a rat and wouldn't put up with this for a minute.

But somehow this is different. Instead of being power-centered (“me centered,” really), the whole thing is God-centered. The casting lots is a method for discerning the LORD's will. Everyone is trusting the LORD to give them the right allocation.

The Israelis are showing some serious faith here.

“The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self” by Carl Trueman, explains how we got to our extraordinary level of “me centeredness.” It's a must read.

He explains this in terms of mimesis and poiesis. These two terms distinguish who controls our destiny. Mimesis is like a farmer who plants seed and then prays for rain. Poiesis is like a farmer who irrigates.

Trueman's point is that our poiesis has reached totality. This is poisonous. For example, while modern medicine is great, and praise the Lord for that, God is still in charge. We've lost that point of view.

Denying God's sovereignty (or fighting it at every step, which we tend to do) is the worst possible error.

Questions for reflection or discussion

1. What's holding us back?
2. How do you discern God's will?
3. What institutions have lost your trust?
4. What other things in the Bible are ahead of their time?
5. Read and discuss Trueman's book.

Items for prayer: