An Inheritance

The land of Canaan is Israel's inheritance (or portion, or heritage).

Numbers 26:1 (NKJV) And it came to pass . . . that the Lord spoke to Moses . . . saying: **2** "Take a census of all the congregation of the children of Israel from twenty years old and above . . . all who are able to go to war in Israel." . . . **51** These *are* those who were numbered of the children of Israel: six hundred and one thousand seven hundred and thirty . . . **53** "To these the land shall be divided as an inheritance, according to the number of names . . . **55** But the land shall be divided by lot . . . **56** According to the lot their inheritance shall be divided between the larger and the smaller."

Exodus 6:8 And I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and I will give it to you *as* a heritage: I *am* the Lord.

The land was first promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, even though they were sojourners or travelers in it during their lifetimes. Remember, God said to Abraham:

Genesis 15:7 . . . "I *am* the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it." . . . **18** On the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying:
"To your descendants I have given this land . . ."

An inheritance may be very great, but until a person takes possession of it, it is only something to dream about and hope for.

In Scripture, Christians have an inheritance - eternal life in heaven.

1 Peter 1:3 (NIV) Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, **4** and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, **5** who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

Ephesians 1:13 (NKJV) In Him you also *trusted,* after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, **14** who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

John 10:28 And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. **29** My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of My Father's hand. **30** I and *My* Father are one."

The psalmist speaks of the Lord as his inheritance or portion:

Psalm 119:57 (NIV) *You are* my portion, O Lord . . .

Psalm 16:5 (NKJV) O Lord, *You are* the portion of my inheritance and my cup;
You maintain my lot.
6 The lines have fallen to me in pleasant *places;*
Yes, I have a good inheritance.

Jeremiah wrote:

Lamentations 3:24 (NKJV) "The Lord *is* my portion," says my soul,
"Therefore I hope in Him!"

The Canaanites had been judged by God to be exceedingly wicked, sinning continually. God used the Israelites to judge them when he told His people to completely destroy the people of Canaan.

When we read the exploits of the Israelites, we read that those that opposed Israel and fought against them were utterly defeated and destroyed. Those that humbled themselves and feared the God of Israel were spared (Rahab and her family and the Gibeonites).

It didn't matter that some of the cities destroyed by Joshua had holy names and histories. Jerusalem was the town of ancient Melchizedek, priest and king of Salem to whom Abraham paid tithes. *Bethel* means "house of God," and Jacob met God there. But these cities with their great histories went up in flames like all the others. A name would not save them, because the inhabitants had become so very wicked. God was against them, and He determined to give this land to the Israelites as an inheritance - and Himself to the Israelites as their God.

The possessing of the land of Canaan is a picture to us of victorious Christian living. It represents all the benefits that come from salvation and living victoriously in Jesus Christ. The battleground for the Israelites was a physical battleground. The battleground for Christians today is in our hearts and minds. Their weapons were swords and spears. Our weapons are spiritual weapons of faith, obedience, prayer, perseverance, worship, the Word, and fellowship. Israel's enemy was sinful, ungodly, unrepentant nations. Our enemy is the devil and sin in our lives. We must completely destroy sin and ungodliness in our lives. If sin is allowed to live in us, it will eventually turn against us and rule us without mercy. Therefore, we must show sin no mercy, and we must slay it. The only way we can possess the land is to fight for it.

Joshua Chapter 13

Joshua 13:1 (NKJV) Now Joshua was old, advanced in years. And the Lord said to him: "You are old, advanced in years, and there remains very much land yet to be possessed. **2** This is the land that yet remains: all the territory of the Philistines and all *that of* the Geshurites, **3** from Sihor . . . the five lords of the Philistines—the Gazites, the Ashdodites, the Ashkelonites, the Gittites, and the Ekronites; also the Avites; **4** from the south, all the land of the Canaanites, and Mearah that belongs to the Sidonians . . . **5** the land of the Gebalites, and all Lebanon . . . **6** all the inhabitants of the mountains from Lebanon as far as the Brook Misrephoth, *and* all the Sidonians—them I will drive out from before the children of Israel; only divide it by lot to Israel as an inheritance, as I have commanded you. **7** Now therefore, divide this land as an inheritance to the nine tribes and half the tribe of Manasseh."

Casting Lots

The Israelites inherited "by lot." The practice of casting lots is mentioned 70 times in the Old Testament and seven times in the New Testament. In spite of the many references to casting lots, very little is known about the process.

The practice of casting lots in Scripture occurs most often in connection with the division of the land under Joshua (chapters 14 - 21). God allowed the Israelites to cast lots in order to determine how the land would be divided (Joshua 18:3-10). Various offices and functions in the temple were also determined by casting lots. (1 Chronicles 25:8-9). The sailors on Jonah's ship cast lots to determine who had brought God's wrath upon their ship (Jonah 1:7). The eleven apostles cast lots to determine who would replace Judas (Acts 1:26). Casting lots eventually became a game people played and made wagers on. This is seen in the Roman soldiers casting lots for Jesus' garments (Matthew 27:35).

The New Testament nowhere instructs Christians to use a method similar to casting lots to help with decision-making. Now that we have the completed Word of God, as well as the Holy Spirit to guide us, there is no reason to cast lots to make decisions. The Word, the Spirit, and prayer are sufficient for discerning God's will today - not casting lots.

However, in Joshua's day, casting lots was a very real way to determine the will of God. When the lot left the hand of the person, God was in control of the outcome.

Proverbs 16:33 (NKJV) The lot is cast into the lap,
But its every decision *is* from the Lord.

Each tribe of Israel received its own particular inheritance. Some tribes received land by the seashore. Others in mountainous territory. Some received much land, while others received a little.

This is a picture to us that we are not all going to be the same in this Christian walk. Each of us has received our portion from the Lord according to our gifts and callings. We must make the most of what the "lot" has determined for us. It is necessary that we seek God's will for our lives, and then it is necessary that we make the most of it!

Sometimes we look at our neighbor and we become discontent with our "lot in life." God has given us our lot based on our disposition, ability, fitness, or a host of other reasons. If we could only be content and make the most of it, we could find true happiness. We can trust that what God has given us is best.

Joshua Chapters 13 (continued) through 19

Chapters 13 through 19 tell the story of dividing the land among the nine and a half tribes that were located west of the Jordan River. We are not going to read all of the chapters - but rather give a summary of the division of land and read only certain sections of these chapters.

Chapter 13:8-33 specifically describes the land that Moses gave to the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh east of the Jordan.

Chapter 14 begins:

Joshua 14:1 (NKJV) These *are the areas* which the children of Israel inherited in the land of Canaan, which Eleazar the priest, Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel distributed as an inheritance to them. **2** Their inheritance *was* by lot, as the Lord had commanded by the hand of Moses, for the nine tribes and the half-tribe. **3** For Moses had given the inheritance of the two tribes and the half-tribe on the other side of the Jordan; but to the Levites he had given no inheritance among them. **4** . . . And they gave no part to the Levites in the land, except cities to dwell *in,* with their common-lands for their livestock and their property. **5** As the Lord had commanded Moses, so the children of Israel did; and they divided the land.

Caleb Inherits Hebron

6 Then the children of Judah came to Joshua in Gilgal. And Caleb . . . said to him: "You know the word which the Lord said to Moses the man of God concerning you and me in Kadesh Barnea. **7** I *was* forty years old when Moses the servant of the Lord sent me from Kadesh Barnea to spy out the land, and I brought back word to him as *it was* in my heart. **8** Nevertheless my brethren who went up with me made the heart of the people melt, but I wholly followed the Lord my God. **9** So Moses swore on that day, saying, 'Surely the land where your foot has trodden shall be your inheritance and your children's forever, because you have wholly followed the Lord my God.' **10** And now, behold, the Lord has kept me alive, as He said, these forty-five years, ever since the Lord spoke this word to Moses while Israel wandered in the wilderness; and now, here I am this day, eighty-five years old. **11** As yet I *am as* strong this day as on the day that Moses sent me; just as my strength *was* then, so now *is* my strength for war, both for going out and for coming in. **12** Now therefore, give me this mountain of which the Lord spoke in that day; for you heard in that day how the Anakim [giants] *were* there, and *that* the cities *were* great *and* fortified. It may be that the Lord *will be* with me, and I shall be able to drive them out as the Lord said."

13 And Joshua blessed him, and gave Hebron to Caleb the son of Jephunneh as an inheritance. **14** Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb . . . to this day, because he wholly followed the Lord God of Israel. **15** And the name of Hebron formerly was Kirjath Arba (*Arba was* the greatest man among the Anakim).

Then the land had rest from war.

Caleb - one of the twelve spies who Moses sent out from Kadesh Barnea - was rewarded for his faithfulness. He is now 85 years old, but he is still strong and a man of war. He is given Hebron for his inheritance - a place formerly called Kirjath Arba, named for a famous giant. Caleb was not afraid of giants, and he inherited the former city of a famed giant.

It is interesting to know that the Cave of the Patriarchs (Machpelah) is located very near Hebron.

Joshua chapter 15 begins by describing the borders of the land given to the tribe of Judah. Caleb's lot was located in Judah:

Joshua 15:13 (NKJV) Now to Caleb . . . he gave a share among the children of Judah . . . *namely,* Kirjath Arba, which *is* Hebron (*Arba was* the father of Anak). **14** Caleb drove out the three sons of Anak from there: Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmai, the children of Anak . . .

16 And Caleb said, "He who attacks Kirjath Sepher and takes it, to him I will give Achsah my daughter as wife." **17** So Othniel the son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb, took it; and he gave him Achsah his daughter as wife. **18** Now it was so, when she came *to him,* that she persuaded him to ask her father for a field. So she dismounted from *her* donkey, and Caleb said to her, "What do you wish?" **19** She

answered, "Give me a blessing; since you have given me land in the South, give me also springs of water." So he gave her the upper springs and the lower springs.

The land in the South was desert, so water sources were an important part of the inheritance. Caleb's daughter, Achsah, was bold enough to ask for springs of water to make her inheritance complete.

Chapter 15 continues by naming all of the cities of Judah and ends with the following verse, giving the first indication that not all of Canaan was conquered:

Joshua 15:63 As for the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem to this day.

Chapters 16 and 17 continue the story of describing the borders of tribes - this time Ephraim and Manasseh (west of the Jordan). These were the tribes of Joseph who received a double portion of the inheritance. We read:

Joshua 17:12 Yet the children of Manasseh could not drive out *the inhabitants of* those cities, but the Canaanites were determined to dwell in that land. **13** And it happened, when the children of Israel grew strong, that they put the Canaanites to forced labor, but did not utterly drive them out.

Chapter 18 begins:

Joshua 18:1 (NKJV) 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. **2** But there remained among the children of Israel seven tribes which had not yet received their inheritance.

Shiloh was a city in Ephraim about 35 miles north of Jerusalem. The tabernacle of the God of Israel was erected there, probably because Shiloh was at the center of the twelve tribes. The ark of the covenant remained at Shiloh for over 300 years until it was captured in a battle with the Philistines.

3 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? **4** 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. **5** 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. **6** 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. **7** 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."

8 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." **9** 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. **10** 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.

Seven of the nine and a half tribes west of the Jordan River had not yet received their allotments. Joshua rebukes them, suggesting that they have been neglectful - perhaps even complacent and lazy.

Chapter 18 continues with the borders of the tribe of Benjamin. Chapter 19 describes the borders of Simeon, Zebulun, Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, and Dan, then ends with Joshua's inheritance.

Joshua 19:49 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.
50 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.

51 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.

The Cities of Refuge

God commanded through Moses that cities of refuge be established throughout Israel. These cities are a picture to us of the mercy of God and the safety that comes from dwelling within His walls.

Joshua 20:1 The Lord also spoke to Joshua, saying, **2** "Speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'Appoint for yourselves cities of refuge, of which I spoke to you through Moses, **3** that the slayer who kills a person accidentally *or* unintentionally may flee there; and they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood. **4** And when he flees to one of those cities, and stands at the entrance of the gate of the city, and declares his case in the hearing of the elders of that city, they shall take him into the city as one of them, and give him a place, that he may dwell among them. **5** Then if the avenger of blood pursues him, they shall not deliver the slayer into his hand, because he struck his neighbor unintentionally, but did not hate him beforehand. **6** And he shall dwell in that city until he stands before the congregation for judgment, *and* until the death of the one who is high priest in those days. Then the slayer may return and come to his own city and his own house, to the city from which he fled.'"
7 So they appointed Kedesh in Galilee, in the mountains of Naphtali, Shechem in the mountains of Ephraim, and Kirjath Arba (which *is* Hebron) in the mountains of Judah. **8** And on the other side of the Jordan, by Jericho eastward, they assigned Bezer in the wilderness on the plain, from the tribe of Reuben, Ramoth in Gilead, from the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan, from the tribe of Manasseh. **9** These were the cities appointed for all the children of Israel and for the stranger who dwelt among them, that whoever killed a person accidentally might flee there, and not die by the hand of the avenger of blood until he stood before the congregation.

The cities of refuge were part of the distribution of the Promised Land among the twelve tribes of Israel. Part of the inheritance of the Levites consisted of forty-eight cities spread throughout the land. Of these forty-eight cities, six were designated as cities of refuge. The cities were Kedesh, Shechem, Hebron, Bezer, Ramoth, and Golan.

The Law of Moses stated that anyone who committed a murder was to be put to death (Exodus 21:14). But for accidental deaths, God set aside these cities to which the killer could flee for refuge (Exodus 21:13). He would be safe from the avenger - the family member charged with avenging his relative's death (Numbers 35:19-21) - until the case could go to trial. The congregation would determine if the attacker acted unintentionally. If he did, he would return to the city of refuge and live there safely and protected until the death of the high priest who was in office at the time of the trial, then he could return to his property. However, if the attacker left the city of refuge before the death of the high priest, his protection would be forfeited, and he would be in danger of the avenger of blood (Numbers 35:24-28).

The cities of refuge were set up among cities of the Levites. Through their consecration as priests, the Levites were mediators between the Israelites and God. As such, they were to mediate between the attacker and the victim's family, ensuring that no further bloodshed would occur.

The cities of refuge are a picture of Christ and His church, in whom sinners find a refuge from the destroyer of souls. Just as the accused sought refuge in the cities set up for that purpose, we flee to Jesus Christ for refuge from sin's penalty:

Hebrews 6:18b (NLT) Therefore, we who have fled to him for refuge can have great confidence as we hold to the hope that lies before us.

Special Arrangement Made for the Tribe of Levi

Only one tribe, the Levites, was not given land to develop. The Levites were the assistants to the priests in the tabernacle worship. The Levites were to have no territory allocated to them like the other tribes in the conquest of Canaan, but they were to be distributed throughout the land, living in certain cities appropriated for their use.

Remember - Jacob's son, Levi, had three sons, Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. Of these, Aaron and Moses were descended from Kohath. Each family of the Levites had their own responsibilities in the Tabernacle worship.

Joshua 21:2 . . . "The Lord commanded through Moses to give us [the Levites] cities to dwell in, with their common-lands for our livestock." **3** So the children of Israel gave to the Levites from their inheritance, at the commandment of the Lord, these cities and their common-lands:
4 Now the lot came out for the families of the Kohathites. And the children of Aaron the priest, *who were* of the Levites, had thirteen cities by lot . . .
5 The rest of the children of Kohath had ten cities by lot . . .
6 And the children of Gershon had thirteen cities by lot . . .
7 The children of Merari . . . had twelve cities . . .
8 And the children of Israel gave these cities with their common-lands by lot to the Levites, as the Lord had commanded by the hand of Moses . . .

41 All the cities of the Levites within the possession of the children of Israel *were* forty-eight cities with their common-lands. **42** Every one of these cities had its common-land surrounding it; thus *were* all these cities.

Chapter 21 ends as follows:

The Promise Fulfilled

43 So the Lord gave to Israel all the land of which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they took possession of it and dwelt in it. **44** The Lord gave them rest all around, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers. And not a man of all their enemies stood against them; the Lord delivered all their enemies into their hand. **45** Not a word failed of any good thing which the Lord had spoken to the house of Israel. All came to pass.