



Who Wants It?!

Joshua #9 • March 1, 2026

Land Rush

It's been a while since you've had a preacher talk about the "red dirt" of Oklahoma, but today we're heading back south! Back there in **location**, and way back in **time**.



The year was 1889. On March 3, President Benjamin Harrison announced that the government would open a 1.9 million-acre tract of Indian Territory in what is now Oklahoma for settlement. The land would open precisely at noon on April 22. Anyone could join the race for the land, but no one was supposed to jump the gun.

With only seven weeks to prepare, land-hungry Americans quickly began to gather around the borders of the irregular rectangle of territory. Referred to as "Boomers," by the appointed day more than 50,000 hopefuls were living in tent cities on all four sides of the territory.

The events that day at Fort Reno on the western border were typical. At 11:50 a.m., soldiers called for everyone to form a line. When the hands of the clock reached noon, the cannon of the fort boomed, and the soldiers signaled the settlers to start. With the crack of hundreds of whips, thousands of Boomers streamed into the territory in wagons, on horseback, and on foot. All told, from 50,000 to 60,000 settlers entered the territory that day. By nightfall, they had staked thousands of claims either on town lots or quarter section farm plots. Towns like Norman, Oklahoma City, Kingfisher, and Guthrie sprang into being almost overnight.

Of course, not everything went as planned. The first Oklahoma land rush was also plagued by greed and fraud. Some people snuck in before April 22 and made their claims early, before the legal date and time. They became known as "Sooners," and cases involving their actions overloaded the courts for years to come.¹

¹ [The Oklahoma land rush begins | April 22, 1889 | HISTORY](#)

Thousands of people had the chance to claim land in Oklahoma, and they took it.

We *could* discuss the qualities that led to their success.

We *could* talk about entrepreneurial spirit...or a fresh start...or escape from poverty...or many other factors that drove these settlers to capture a piece of property.

But really, it all boils down to this:



Who wants it?!

Keep that question in mind as we study today.

Recap



Despite preaching last week only on chapters 9-10 out of 24-chapter book, we are actually nearing the end of our sermon series on the book of Joshua. *(Next week we will wrap up the series before pivoting toward Easter.)*

“*Be strong and courageous*” was the phrase God told Joshua as we started the book.



*“Only **be strong and very courageous**, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go.”* (Joshua 1:7, ESV)

And the nation of Israel has had success as they’ve done “*strong and courageous*” things. We’ve seen them advance into the Promised Land, following God’s miraculous leading. Joshua has repeatedly called the nation to follow their God, obeying His instructions just as they were told. And even when the people haven’t done things perfectly, God has faithfully given them a chance to repent and turn back to Him.

Today, as we continue our study, we will cover a large block of written material. In today’s sermon we will review what happens in chapters 11-21 (eleven chapters!).

Why such a big chunk of Scripture? Honestly, it’s because these chapters contain an abundance of long sections that read like this:



“The allotment for the tribe of the people of Judah according to their clans reached southward to the boundary of Edom, to the wilderness of Zin at the farthest south. And their south boundary ran from the end of the Salt Sea, from the bay that faces southward. It goes out southward of the ascent of Akrabbim, passes along to Zin, and goes up south of Kadesh-barnea, along by Hezron, up to Addar, turns about to Karka, passes along to Azmon, goes out by the Brook of Egypt, and comes to its end at the sea. This shall be your south boundary.”
(Joshua 15:1–4, ESV)

(Phew! Riveting!)

Sometimes as we read Scripture, we encounter sections of the Bible like this, which are about as exciting to read as a tax form! Passages found in several books of Scripture contain **genealogies** filled with hundreds of hard-to-pronounce names, or **catalogs** of locations. Today’s section in the book of Joshua is similar, just multiplied by twelve! It is filled with **place names detailing the boundaries of settlement** for the twelve tribes of Israel in ancient Palestine.

For people unaccustomed to reading the Hebrew language, locations like “*Zenan, Hadashah, Migdal-gad*” (Joshua 15:37, ESV) will be hard to say and hard to read. For people unfamiliar with ancient Canaanite geography, locations like “*Mizpah, Kephirah, Mozah,*” (Joshua 18:26, NLT) will be hard to find.

But they are important.

Not only are they the “boots on the ground” details telling **real people** the **real locations** that their **real God** has finally fulfilled His promises...but these place names are also interspersed with information that communicates spiritual truth. Remember:



“All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right.”
(2 Timothy 3:16, NLT)

In other words, we need to learn from this section! So let me help you sort through the details to take away at least one spiritual challenge this morning.

Who wants it?! Let’s go!



Dividing the Land

When the Boomers and Sooners entered the Oklahoma territories, they were seeking to claim land that had been assigned by the federal government. But when the Israelites entered the Promised Land, they were seeking to claim land that had been assigned by God!

Gaining Control

By the time we reach the end of Joshua chapter eleven, the major battles for control of the Land are complete.



“So Joshua took control of the entire land, just as the Lord had instructed Moses. He gave it to the people of Israel as their special possession, dividing the land among the tribes. So the land finally had rest from war.” (Joshua 11:23, NLT)

Israel’s initial conquest took place in two major campaigns, a **southern** campaign and a **northern** one.

- The **southern campaign** started in last week’s sermon, when a coalition of armies (led by the king of Jerusalem) attacked the people of Gibeon and were defeated by Israelite forces in a surprise attack (10:1–15). Then, after killing the kings of the defeated armies (10:16–27), the Israelites swept through and destroyed a number of southern towns (10:28–42), effectively clearing the hill country of Judea for settlement before returning to camp at Gilgal.
- The **northern campaign** was also instigated by a group of Canaanite armies, with the king of Hazor in the lead (11:1–5). Joshua defeated the northern coalition, also in a surprise attack, then destroyed the great city of Hazor (11:6–15). This victory cleared the way for Israel to conquer the rest of the hill country and Jordan Valley (11:16–22). Chapter 12 summarizes all the kings Israel defeated, both east of the Jordan and within Canaan.²

² [New Living Translation Study Bible](#) (Jos 11:1–3). (2008). Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.

With Israel in control of the land, it was time to move from swords to plowshares. They needed to transition from battle to belonging. God tells Joshua:



*“I myself will drive these people out of the land ahead of the Israelites. So be sure to **give this land** to Israel as a special possession, just as I have commanded you. Include all this territory as Israel’s possession when you divide this land among the nine tribes and the half-tribe of Manasseh.”* (Joshua 13:6–7, NLT)

In the material that follows (spanning multiple chapters!), the book of Joshua flies over the country and establishes borders for each of the tribes (see the map on screen).



- Some of the tribes had **already received** their land on the east side of the Jordan River.
- Others were **assigned directly** – God placed Judah, Manasseh, and Ephraim in specific locations.
- Still others were assigned by **casting lots** – seven remaining parcels of land were created, and then God was consulted to see which tribes were to move in where.

“And when you record the seven divisions of the land and bring them to me, I will cast sacred lots in the presence of the Lord our God to assign land to each tribe.” (Joshua 18:6, NLT)

- Only one tribe was not given a specific land– the **tribe of Levi**. Their blessing wasn’t land; it was serving God as priests and teachers of the Law. So, instead of territory, they were given **cities** with limited amounts of pastureland that were scattered across the entire country. Each tribe had Levitical cities within their borders so that the Levites could minister to the entire nation.

It was in this way that God divided the land.

God’s to Give

God’s sovereign rule over Israel’s allotments reminds us of a big truth: that **God places us where He wants us!** In Acts 17, the apostle Paul says:



“From one man he created all the nations throughout the whole earth. He decided beforehand when they should rise and fall, and he

determined their boundaries. His purpose was for the nations to seek after God and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him—though he is not far from any one of us.” (Acts 17:26–27, NLT)

We might not be given divine boundaries like Israel was, but we are guided and led to different locations, nonetheless. It may be the town in which you live; it may be the neighborhood or the farm where you bought property. Wherever you are, God put you there (here!) so you can feel your way toward Him, and so you can lead others to Him!

Do you view your location as a divine assignment?

Do you even have eyes to see it?! Thousands of people in Tonganoxie alone – THOUSANDS – need Jesus. They live around you. They are here. Neighbors. Classmates. Cousins. Coworkers. Business owners. Retirees. Moms. Babies.

We have the opportunity to **ble**ss people in this community with the Gospel – to **begin to pray** for them, **listen** to them, **eat** with them, **serve** them, and **share** our story about Jesus with them. We don’t have to go overseas to find the lost – they are here!

Thousands don’t know Jesus. What will you do with the opportunity?

Who wants it?!

Failure to Finish

Unfinished Tasks

We know who **didn’t** want the opportunity. As we go back to the section of Joshua, we discover that God’s distribution of land didn’t go quite as smoothly as we would have hoped.

We mentioned that Joshua had completed **major battles** and was **in control** of the land. But that’s like saying in a game of chess that you have taken out your opponents’ major pieces (the rooks, knights, bishops, and queen). The game isn’t quite over; several pawns stand between you and victory.

Like in chess, those minor obstacles should be easily toppled. But like in chess, you still must make the moves until you reach checkmate!



The Israelite tribes needed to “take out the pawns.” And that means they really had only a few critical tasks:



1. **Drive out those in their territory.** While the major hubs of defense are shattered, local opposition remains. Each tribe was supposed to go in and finish the job within their territory, driving out the inhabitants along with their evil religious practices.
2. **Settle and make it prosperous.** The tribes were to settle into the land, assigning portions for each clan and family to steward.
3. **Honor God as they did so.** Obedience to God would result in abundant blessings.

Simple task, right?

But not all of them did what they should...



“But the tribe of Judah could not drive out the Jebusites, who lived in the city of Jerusalem, so the Jebusites live there among the people of Judah to this day.” (Joshua 15:63, NLT)

“They did not drive the Canaanites out of Gezer, however, so the people of Gezer live as slaves among the people of Ephraim to this day.” (Joshua 16:10, NLT)

In fact, in the next book of the Bible (Judges 1:27ff), we find a list of tribes and the people they failed to remove from the land. *“Manasseh did not drive out... Ephraim did not drive out...Zebulun did not drive out...Asher did not drive out...”*

In fact, one tribe didn’t even **claim** their land because of opposition.

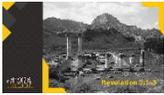


“As for the tribe of Dan, the Amorites forced them back into the hill country and would not let them come down into the plains.” (Judges 1:34, NLT)

They eventually settled in the far north rather than claim their inheritance!

Embracing our Assignment?

Lest you think that attitude ended with the Israelites, it didn’t. It continues even in New Testament times, as people fail to follow God’s plans for



blessing. Jesus even sends a message of rebuke to one church (the church of Sardis, near Izmir in modern-day Türkiye), recorded in the book of Revelation:

*“I know all the things you do, and that you have a reputation for being alive—but you are dead. Wake up! Strengthen what little remains, for even what is left is almost dead. I find that **your actions do not meet the requirements of my God**. Go back to what you heard and believed at first; hold to it firmly. Repent and turn to me again. If you don’t wake up, I will come to you suddenly, as unexpected as a thief.”*
(Revelation 3:1–3, NLT)

I pray that Jesus will not have a similar rebuke for Tonganoxie Christian Church!

If He placed us here and gave us a divine assignment to build His Kingdom here in Tonganoxie and beyond..., have we embraced it? Or ignored it?

If we have the opportunity to **ble**ss people in this community with the Gospel, as we mentioned earlier, then...



- **Who, today, have you prayed would accept Him as Lord and Savior?** (Glenn)
- **When is the last spiritual conversation you’ve had with someone who needs Jesus?** (Ryan)
- **Who have you invited to share a meal?** (Travis)
- **Whose needs have you tried to meet, in the name of Jesus?** (Chelsea)

I have names. Do you? If you can’t give names, this stays academic. If you want it to be real, then it requires effort and an intentional plan.

Who wants it?!



A Strong Example: Caleb

Some of the Israelites failed. But some became an example of obedience.

The Story of Caleb

Can I share the example of one man? His name is Caleb. He, along with Joshua, had a history of trusting God and saying, “*I want to do this!*” He had

been one of the two original spies who faithfully trusted that God would deliver the Promised Land into the Israelites' hands (Numbers 13).

And now, years later, his faith remains strong.

“A delegation from the tribe of Judah, led by Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite, came to Joshua at Gilgal. Caleb said to Joshua, “Remember what the Lord said to Moses, the man of God, about you and me when we were at Kadesh-barnea. I was forty years old when Moses, the servant of the Lord, sent me from Kadesh-barnea to explore the land of Canaan. I returned and gave an honest report, but my brothers who went with me frightened the people from entering the Promised Land. For my part, I wholeheartedly followed the Lord my God. So that day Moses solemnly promised me, ‘The land of Canaan on which you were just walking will be your grant of land and that of your descendants forever, because you wholeheartedly followed the Lord my God.’

*“Now, as you can see, the Lord has kept me alive and well as he promised for all these forty-five years since Moses made this promise—even while Israel wandered in the wilderness. Today I am eighty-five years old. I am as strong now as I was when Moses sent me on that journey, and I can still travel and fight as well as I could then. **So give me the hill country that the Lord promised me.** You will remember that as scouts we found the **descendants of Anak** living there in great, walled towns. **But if the Lord is with me, I will drive them out of the land, just as the Lord said.**”*

*So Joshua blessed Caleb son of Jephunneh and gave Hebron to him as his portion of land. Hebron still belongs to the descendants of Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite because he **wholeheartedly followed the Lord, the God of Israel.**”*
(Joshua 14:6–14, NLT)



That is strength! That is courage! 85-year old Caleb is ready to throw down! He already has proven his worth and faithfulness from the time of Moses. And here, instead of taking the easy route, he looks at the territory and says, “I want to finish the task...right over there!”

“Right over there” was where the descendants of Anak lived. The “Anakim” were big boys – viewed as giants (think Shaquille O’Neal or bigger). They had frightened the people back when Caleb was a spy. Who could defeat them?!

But here, Caleb says,

“Who wants it?! I do!”

What empowered him to have that confidence?!

- God’s **promise**. He trusted the words of God.
- God’s **presence**. He trusted that God would be with him.

“If God is with me, they don’t stand a chance!”

And they didn’t. Caleb succeeds against the giants, as we see here and later in Judges 1:20, because he wholeheartedly followed the Lord.

Caleb wanted it. Do you?

Follow the Example

The task is clear. We have a kingdom to build! **Who wants it?!**

The opportunities are abundant. We have people to claim for Christ! **Who wants it?!**

The source of our success is present. We are empowered by the Spirit of God! **Who wants it?!**

Closing

Don’t walk out of here today without considering your desire to follow the Lord wholeheartedly...or without coming up with a plan to do so.

The Boomers and Sooners didn’t walk into Oklahoma without a plan to claim it. The Israelites knew they had a path and plan for victory...if they would just follow it.

What about you? Who wants it?!

If you want to see God’s Kingdom grow, including its growth here at TCC, then let’s treat our time here as a divine assignment.



- God has placed you here.
- He wants to grow His kingdom here.
- He's looking for strong and courageous people to share in His future, certain victory.

Who wants it?! (I do)

Who wants it?! (I do)

Who wants it?! (I do)

Then let's do it!



Prayer

Invitation

If you want to make a difference for the Kingdom of God, then we invite you to pray now for success. Or come forward and grow the ranks! Make that decision to follow Jesus as Lord and Savior, and be obedient in baptism. Come up to the front and wait as we stand and sing...

Sermon Notes

Land Rush

(Joshua 1:7; Joshua 15:1-4; 15:37; 18:26; 2 Timothy 3:16)

Dividing the Land

(Joshua 11:23; 13:6-7; 18:6; Acts 17:26-27)

Failure to Finish

(Joshua 15:63; 16:10; Judges 1:34; Revelation 3:1-3)

A Strong Example: Caleb

(Joshua 14:6-14)

Who wants it?!

Sermon Discussion Questions

- Why is it important for Scripture to show the details of where each tribe settled in the Promised Land? See Joshua 11:23
- Read Acts 17:26-27. What role does God play in where we live and serve Him? Do you view your residence as a divine assignment?
- How many people in Tonganoxie (or your own town) don't know Jesus? Does this number motivate you to take action? Why or why not?
- Read Joshua 16:10. Why would the people fail to carry out God's commands completely? What stops us from following Him completely?
- Read Joshua 14:6-14. What do you find inspiring about Caleb's attitude and actions? Why does he have success?
- Who, today, have you prayed would accept Him as Lord and Savior?
- When is the last spiritual conversation you've had with someone who needs Jesus?
- Who have you invited to share a meal?
- Whose needs have you tried to meet, in the name of Jesus?