

**Joshua**  
**Receiving the Inheritance**  
 Joshua 13:8-21:45

In **Ephesians 1:18**, Paul prayed that the Ephesians' hearts and, by extension, our hearts, be enlightened by the Holy Spirit, so we would know, in a deeply personal way, *the riches of God's glorious inheritance in his people*. You are God's rich inheritance!

Just as amazing, we have received a rich inheritance from God. The story of Israel in the book of **Joshua** illustrates that for us in fascinating ways. **Romans 15:4** *For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope.*

In **Joshua 13-21** there are four insights about Israel's inheritance in the Promised Land that foreshadow our own spiritual inheritance as Christians. The book of **Joshua** is far more than intriguing history. It's theology in historical dress.

1. Land Conquered vs. Land Controlled (13:1-21:45)

**11:23** *Joshua took the whole land God promised Abraham.*

**13:1ff** *There remains yet very much land to possess.*

This *already-but-not-yet* situation is more than an intriguing point in Jewish history; it is a profound illustration of our spiritual salvation in Christ. See last week's message for more on this.

2. Caleb's Example (14:6-15; cp. Numbers 13:22)

We may retire from our vocation, but we must never retire from our avocation—our calling and true passion—to serve the kingdom of God.

3. The Levites' Inheritance

**13:14a** *To the tribe of Levi alone Moses gave no inheritance.*

**13:33a** *But to the tribe of Levi Moses gave no inheritance.*

**14:2-4a** *...but to the Levites he gave no inheritance among them...no portion was given to the Levites in the land.*

**18:7a** *The Levites have no portion among you.*

The Levites, were not given land to develop. Instead, they were to serve as Yahweh's priests among the other tribes, including overseeing the tabernacle and all its rites and furnishings. Their unique inheritance is described in four profound statements:

- o **13:14b** *...The offerings by fire to Yahweh Elohim are their inheritance.*

This entailed, not only the enormous privilege of standing before God on behalf of his people, but also receiving a portion of the meat brought to the altar for sacrifice. This would certainly include the tithes and first fruits (**Leviticus 27:30-32; Numbers 18:21-32**). This is astounding, because the offerings and tithes were wholly devoted to Yahweh. So, how is it the Levites get a share? Maybe the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of their inheritance gives the answer.

- o **13:33b** *...Yahweh Elohim of Israel is their inheritance.*

E.g., Asaph, a Levitical priest, one of the three commissioned by David to be in charge of singing in the house of Yahweh writes this in **Psalms 73:25-26** *Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.*

- o **14:4b** *...Cities (48) to dwell in and pastures for their livestock*

It was in these cities, scattered throughout the land, that the priests carried out their duties, in addition to what priests were doing at the Tabernacle in Shiloh.

**Joshua 21:1-45** goes into great detail about these 48 cities and their locations. **Verse 3** states a profound implication in the granting of these cities to the Levites. They were given *"out of each tribes' inheritance."* This is akin to their annual tithe in support of the Levites—1/10 of their income (**Numbers 18:21-26**) given/paid in joyful obedience to God.

- o **18:7b** *...The priesthood of Yahweh is their heritage.*

In these 48 cities and at the Tabernacle in Shiloh, the priests performed the following functions:

Offered up sacrifices— **Leviticus 17:1-7**

Blessed God's people — **Numbers 6:22-27** (cp. **2 Chronicles 30:27**)

Taught Israel from Scripture — **Ezra 7:10, Malachi 2:4-7**

Exercised judgement, as local magistrates, according to God's Word — **Deuteronomy 17:9-11**

Served as medical doctors and health inspectors treating sickness and determining if they needed to be *"put outside the camp"* or quarantined - **Leviticus 1-14**

4. Cities of Refuge (20:1-9)

Among the 48 cities given to the Levites, six were designated as cities of refuge—*Kedesh, Shechem, Hebron, Bezer, Ramoth, and Golan.*

The cities of refuge are a type of Christ, in whom sinners find refuge. Just as the person sought refuge in the cities set up for that purpose, we flee to Christ for refuge from sin's punishment (**Hebrews 6:18**). Like the high priest of old, it's his death, as our Great High Priest, that forever sets us free, so that no one can condemn us or separate us from the safety of Christ's love (**Romans 8:31-39**).

### Our Priesthood in Christ

The priesthood of Israel, especially the high priest, foreshadowed Jesus' life and ministry, but also our own life and ministry as God's people.

From the very beginning, God wanted humanity to be holy priests serving him on earth (**Genesis 2:15** – the same terms used later for the holy work of the Levitical priests at the Jewish temple).

**Exodus 19:5-6** God wanted all of Israel to be his priests, but they refused. So, the sacred privilege was bestowed on a single tribe within Israel—the tribe of Levi.

In Jesus Christ, God's original plan for *the priesthood of all his people* is being realized through the Church. **1 Peter 2:9** - *But you (you Gentile and Jewish believers) are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*

A core truth of the New Testament is **the priesthood of all believers**. In **1 Peter 2**, the apostle Peter compares and, at the same time, contrasts our priestly work with the Levitical priests by emphasizing that we offer up "spiritual sacrifices" in the service of God and others. **v. 5** *You, like living stones (contrast to the temple), are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

In the NT, there are 10 ways we serve as God's holy priests (For more details, see the series *The Real Royals*.)

### Ten Ways We Serve as New Testament Believer-Priests

1. **Our Bodies** – **Romans 12:1** *I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.*
2. **Worship** – **Hebrews 13:15** *Through Jesus let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name;*
3. **Prayer** – **Revelation 5 & 8** – *our prayers come up before God as incense in worship, and in conjunction with his holy angels, God moves heaven and earth to defeat evil through prayers we offer up in Jesus name and according to God's will.* **1 Timothy 2:1-5** First of all intercede for all people including heads of state. (**Ephesians 6:18; Colossians 1:9-14; Romans 15:30; Philippians 1:19; 2 Corinthians 1:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:25; KEY: James 5:13-15**)
4. **Confession** – **James 5:16** *Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.* James is saying that the local church should be the safest place on earth, a place where we can be priests to one another, where we can be part of a caring community where we are fully known and still loved and valued, a place where the burden of our own brokenness is shared by a loving group of believing friends who are utterly committed to our wellbeing in Christ, where confidentiality is held as a sacred trust. That's why doing life together in a small group is not optional, it's essential when it comes to our spiritual health.

5. **Doing Good** – **Hebrews 13:16a** *And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.* (cp. **Galatians 6:10**)
6. **Sharing/Giving** – **Hebrews 13:16b** *Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.* **Philippians 4:14-20** *I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.*
7. **Evaluating and Intervening** – **James 5:19-20** *My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.* (**Galatians 6:1; Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13**)
8. **Encouraging, Comforting and Caring** – **Hebrews 3:13** *Exhort (admonish, encourage) one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.* **2 Corinthians 1:3-6** *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort who comforts us in all our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.* **Romans 12:15** *Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep.* (cp. **1 Thessalonians 4:18; 5:11**) The local church should be the most caring place on earth.
9. **Proclaiming** – **1 Peter 2:9** *You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.* Although we are not gifted by the Spirit to be prophets in the formal sense, each of us is called to be prophetic in terms of speaking truth (the Gospel) that pierces the heart.

#### a. Teaching

Elders, Pastors, Teachers: **1 Timothy 3:2; 2 Timothy 2:24-25; 4:1-2; Ephesians 4:11-16; James 3:1**

All Believers: **1 John 2:27** *But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him.* (cp. **Romans 15:14; Titus 2:1-6; Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:18-19**)

#### b. Witnessing

**Romans 15:15-16** *I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.* (cp. **1 Peter 3:15-16; Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; 4:23-31; 8:1-4; 11:19-26**)

### 10. Reigning with Christ

- a. **Now:** In Christ, every believer can presently exercise their right to reign over the devil—without exception, without equivocation!

**Luke 10:19-20** *I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, (not talking about literal snakes & scorpions, but demons), but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.* (**Romans 6:1-14; 8:31-39; Ephesians 6:10-20**) Sin and Satan have no right to rule our lives!

- b. **Forever:** If we serve as faithful priests with Christ, here and now, through trials and suffering, we will rule with Christ in glory over the earth when he returns.

**Revelation 5:9-10** *And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you (Jesus) to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."* (**Romans 8:17; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18; 2 Timothy 2:12; Revelation 20:6**)