

Message #31**Joshua 18:11-28**

The birth of Benjamin was a bizarre beginning to life. Benjamin's father, Jacob, had two sons by his wife Rachel. The sons were Joseph and Benjamin (Gen. 35:24). While traveling through Palestine, somewhere on the road between Bethel and Ephrath, better known as Bethlehem (Gen. 35:16), Rachel went into labor and it was very severe. Rachel gave birth to Benjamin and she died giving birth; she died giving Benjamin life (Gen. 35:1-16). Today, many liberals would say she should have had an abortion. She should have killed her baby; but Rachel did not do that.

I don't know what it was like to grow up without a natural mother, but we do know that Benjamin was one tough boy. People from Benjamin's family became great warriors. In fact, when Jacob made his prophetic predictions, just before his own death, he predicted that Benjamin is a "ravenous wolf" who "devours his prey" and "divides the spoil" (Gen. 49:27).

He was such a great warrior that he could take things swiftly. He could attack in the morning and have conquered by evening. We know from later Biblical data that those from Benjamin's line were great men of war. In fact, many became experts with weapons like a sling (Judges 20:14-17).

In fact, there is an interesting story in Judges. Twenty-six thousand men went up against 400,000 men of Israel and even though they were defeated, they killed 40,000 before they were killed (Judges 20:14-17).

King Saul, the first king of Israel, came from the tribe of Benjamin (I Sam. 9:1-2). Also Saul who became Paul, was also of the tribe of Benjamin (Philippians 3:5).

Now the reason we bring this up is because of this text in Joshua. It was time for Benjamin to receive its inheritance. What we learn is this:

THE ALLOTMENT OF LAND GIVEN TO BENJAMIN CLEARLY ESTABLISHES THAT GOD KNOWS WHERE HIS PEOPLE NEED TO LIVE AND WHAT HIS PEOPLE CAN ACCOMPLISH.

The more I study this book of Joshua, the more convinced I am that we are physically living where we live by sovereign decree of God. None of us are perfect. None of us have completely obeyed God in everything, but God has so moved so that you live where you live and you work where you work. You are part of this ministry because God has moved in your life and mind.

What we need to realize is that we can handle everything God entrusts to us. God will not give any of us more than we are able to bear and He also will not give us less than we are able to bear. God will put us and assign us to exactly the place we need to be and the proof of it is Benjamin.

Benjamin had a godly father, but the fact is he grew up without his natural mother. I am certain that he was well cared for by Jacob's concubines, but he still did not have his mother. But God was sovereign in this. God was sovereignly molding Benjamin so he would become a tough warrior for Him.

Benjamin, as you will see, would inherit "the" most blessed place on this earth and he would have to wage war in some of the toughest country in the Promised Land. But he was up for the task. God had groomed him.

You may have a background that is bizarre. You may have circumstances in your past history that are not typical. You may not have had a normal childhood or a functional father or mother. Don't miss this point—God was still and is still sovereign in your life.

God granted your life and He sustained you through all of the hurt and loneliness. He knew what you could handle and whatever hand you were dealt, God was in it. If you are a believer in Christ, His sovereign hand of salvation was on you. With all of your baggage and hang-ups, He knew you were just the person for His assignments. That is the story of Benjamin.

Now this text may be broken down under two main Benjamin inheritance distributions:

INHERITANCE DISTRIBUTION #1 – The boundaries of the land are distributed to Benjamin. **18:11-20**

As we come to **verse 11**, we read that the lot came to Benjamin. God is the One who determined when the lot falls to these various tribes and He is the One who determines what land they receive.

If you look at your maps, you will notice that Benjamin receives land whose eastern border is the Jordan River, whose northern border is the land of Ephraim (16:1-3; 12-14), whose western border is the land of Dan and whose southern border is the land of Judah (15:5-9; 15-19).

If we carefully analyze this land there is not much land north to south, about 15 miles and only about 25 miles worth of land from east to west.

There would eventually be trouble between the sons of Judah and the other tribes, so Benjamin was put right in the center of that land.

When we read **verses 12-13**, we quickly realize that the description of the land moves from east to west, from north to south. The geography of this land is tough. The territory is filled with mountains and ravines. It is filled with rough terrain and frankly does not appear to be very productive.

The northern side of Jericho (v. 12) is high ground and according to **verse 14**, the land does not run to the Mediterranean, which leaves room for Dan. Benjamin's southern border is Judah's northern border (15:5-9).

But we will see that this land holds some of the most blessed places of Almighty God. Do not be shocked if initially what we are called to do does not seem to be plush or productive. God calls us to be in a church that is not too glamorous or plush. It may not be the biggest church, but potentially it may contain the greatest blessings of God.

When we were in Turkey, probably the least impressive ruins of the seven churches of Revelation were the ruins in Philadelphia. Ephesus was spectacular. Laodicea was very impressive. The ruins of Sardis and Smyrna were fascinating, but Philadelphia didn't look like much at all. In fact, it probably wasn't even worth the stop. But when you look at Scripture, the most blessed church of all was Philadelphia. It wasn't big but it was blessed. That is the land of Benjamin.

Years ago, Pastor George Gardiner told the story of a time he took a small church outside of Boston. He said when he first pulled up to the church, some of the windows were broken out and it was totally run down and it had less than 50 people. In fact, Pastor Gardiner said when his wife first saw the church, she asked him if he were sure God was calling him here. He was leaving a successful pastorate. Well God did call him there and in the next eleven years, God blessed that church. What appeared to be a dry, depressing ministry became one that God blessed. The church grew. Many came to faith in Christ and grew in their love for the Lord. When he finally left it, several hundred people were part of it. That church was a lot like the inheritance of Benjamin. It initially didn't look like much; but God would soon change that.

You may be in a relationship or a job or a situation that does not appear to be too productive. Your life may be filled with tough mountains to climb. Things may seem dark and overwhelming. Stay faithful to God and stay active for God. Watch what He will do.

INHERITANCE DISTRIBUTION #2 – The cities of the land are distributed to Benjamin.
18:21-28

Now the total number of cities that are described in these verses are 26. **Verses 21-24** describe the cities of the east and **verses 25-28** describe the cities of the west.

In fact, Gibeah, mentioned in **verse 28**, was King Saul's hometown (I Sam.11:4; 10:26).

Now there were two very important cities that Benjamin inherited. Really one of the cities becomes the most critical city of the world, but both were extremely important and both cities begin with the letter "J."

Important City #1 - The city of Jericho. **18:21**

Jericho is given to Benjamin here and a long lapse of time occurs before it shows up again. We may remember that Jericho had been destroyed (Joshua 6:26). It will be mentioned again during the days of David (II Sam. 10:5). Hiel the Bethelite actually rebuilt it (I Kings 16:34) during the reign of Ahab, some 500-600 years later after this moment.

Many powerful things happened here during the time of Elijah. Prophets of God actually lived in Jericho (II Kings 2:5). Elisha healed springs of water (II Kings 2:19-22) and Elijah was taken into heaven (II Kings 2:11). We know that people from Jericho helped Nehemiah rebuild the walls in Jerusalem (Neh. 3:2).

When Jesus was here on earth, He restored sight to a blind person in Jericho (Matt. 20:29-34) and Zacchaeus entertained Jesus in his home in Jericho (Luke 19:1-8).

All of these amazing things happened in this city that was given to Benjamin. This rugged hill country became a diamond in the rough for the blessings of God.

Important City #2 - The city of Jerusalem. **18:28**

The second city and most important city was Jerusalem. This is the only city that will exist in eternity. It is the most sacred city in all the program of God, and that city belongs to Benjamin.

This is a city that keeps its name for all eternity.

What an amazing thing. **Little Benjamin, who grew up without a mother, was the recipient of the queen mother city of God's world.** God entrusted His city to Benjamin because God knew he could protect it and defend it.

This land did not initially look like much, but in that land was one city that eventually will become the city where Jesus Christ will reign.

I do not know all of the misery you have experienced in your life; but I do know this—God was in it and He was sovereign.

He protected you, preserved you, and He will turn your dry existence into being fruitful.

PRACTICAL THOUGHTS:

- 1. God has you right where He wants you right now even if it doesn't look too great.**
- 2. The place where you are may be tough, but God has you there because He knows you can accomplish what He wants.**
- 3. Your checkered past does not mean you cannot be greatly used by God.**