

God had fulfilled the 400-year-old promise to give the land in which Abraham had wandered to his descendants. They had miraculously been delivered from slavery in Egypt by the miracle of the plagues, been sustained in the wilderness for forty years (Nehemiah 9:21ⁱ), and conquered the tribes on both sides of the Jordan River. They had witnessed the hand of God in the stopping of the Jordan River at flood stage (Joshua 3:16ⁱⁱ), the walls of Jericho falling flat, and the hailstones rained down on the evil Amorites (Joshua 10:11ⁱⁱⁱ). They knew God was in their midst and had chosen them as a people group (Deuteronomy 7:7,8^{iv}).

I don't think they understood the extent of the promises God had given to Abraham. He had promised that he would be the father of many nations, not just Israel (Genesis 17:5^v). He had also promised his offspring would bless the world (Genesis 12:3^{vi}). The Apostle Paul explains in the chapter the men's group recently studied, Romans chapter four, that God meant more than physical descendants or those who keep God's laws, but rather the people that follow in Abraham's footsteps of faith, believing and trusting in God (Romans 4:16,17^{vii}). They are the nations of which Abraham is the father. They are the heirs of the promise, for we have been blessed in *the* descendant of Abraham, Jesus the Christ.

As they moved into the land promised to them, I believe their focus was on the fulfillment of receiving the land. Today we can see the fulfillment of the promise to bless the world in the contributions the Jewish people have made. Israelis have won more Nobel prizes per capita than the USA, Germany and France. Their medicines and current research are groundbreaking. Our former elder Gary Alden sent me some good news about Israeli research. The University of Tel Aviv is developing a nasal vaccine that will protect people from Alzheimer's and stroke. Bar Ilan University is studying a new drug that fights viruses by blood. It is called the Vecoy Trap because it tricks a virus into self-destruction. It will be very useful to fight Hepatitis, and in the future AIDS and Ebola. The Ichlov Center (Tel Aviv) has isolated a protein that makes colonoscopy unnecessary to detect colon cancer with a simple blood test. I could go on and on.

Even more importantly they received and preserved what we call the Old Testament upon which the legal system of the Western world was based (Romans 3:1,2^{viii}). God blessed the world through this nation, but God's promise to Abraham was much broader. He is the father of not one nation, but many spiritual nations who believe by faith in what God has done for us in Jesus.

The physical descendants were about to divide the land among their tribes with the exception of the Levites. *¹⁴ To the tribe of Levi alone Moses gave no inheritance. The offerings by fire to the LORD God of Israel are their inheritance, as he said to him.* Joshua 13:14 *³³ But to the tribe of Levi Moses gave no inheritance; the LORD God of Israel is their inheritance, just as he said to them.* Joshua 13:33 The Levites did not receive an area because they received the offerings by fire to support them. Leviticus describes which offerings and what portion of the offering was theirs. It was to be their provision. But much more frequently stated in the books of Moses is that the LORD is their inheritance. The privilege of serving the LORD in the sanctuary was to be more valuable to them than land. This foreshadows the New Testament saints. We have no

inheritance in the world, but the LORD is our inheritance. We are satisfied and supplied by serving Him.

Joshua 14:3,4^{ix} tells us that they were given cities throughout Israel with pastureland for their flocks and herds. Numbers 19:20-32 instructs Israel that a tithe of all tithes goes to the priests. We can glean from other passages that the Levite clans took turns of service at certain times of the year. The clan for special service on feast days was chosen by lot. When it was a certain family's time to serve, the men would leave their wives and children to care for their herds and go to the temple. Even the men assigned for special tasks were chosen by lot. We have an example of this in Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, serving in the Holy Place when the angel appeared to him (Luke 1:8,9^x).

God wanted the whole nation of Israel to be priests representing Him to the world (Exodus 19:6^{xi}). They failed to fulfill that role, so now the task is for the people of faith who believe as Abraham did (2 Corinthians 2:14^{xii}).

Following the shadow presented in the Levite priests of Israel, we see it is not wrong for us to own property, but we just don't see it as our main inheritance. It is merely a place for us to reside while we await our call to duty. Nor do we all minister fulltime. We are given opportunities now and then and that is our delight. To be chosen to serve and help others get to know our God is our inheritance. That is what we value. And there are times when we are chosen for a very special assignment, such as leading a person to salvation, or sharing the Word of God, or standing up for Biblical truth in this fallen world. The Lord Himself is our inheritance and that is one reason the New Testament calls all believers priests (1 Peter 2:5^{xiii}). That is one reason we are children of Abraham, for the Scripture says the LORD was his very great reward (Genesis 15:1^{xiv}).

We have come to the distribution of the land to the tribes that will be on the west side of the Jordan. ¹ *These are the inheritances that the people of Israel received in the land of Canaan, which Eleazar the priest and Joshua the son of Nun and the heads of the fathers' houses of the tribes of the people of Israel gave them to inherit.* ² *Their inheritance was by lot, just as the LORD had commanded by the hand of Moses for the nine and one-half tribes.* Joshua 14:1,2 Moses had commanded that the sections of land be determined by lot. That left everything up to God so the distribution would be without prejudice. No one could complain, for it would be determined by the Lord. The author is careful to point out that Joshua does everything just as Moses commanded. He is faithful to the recorded Word of the Lord from Moses (Numbers 34:13^{xv}).

But there was a promised exception to the division of land by lot. ⁶ *Then the people of Judah came to Joshua at Gilgal. And Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him, "You know what the LORD said to Moses the man of God in Kadesh-barnea concerning you and me. 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 him word again as it was in my heart. ⁸ But my brothers who went up with me made the heart of the people melt; yet I wholly followed the LORD my God. ⁹ And Moses swore on that day, saying, 'Surely the land on which your foot has trodden shall be an inheritance for you and your children forever, because you have wholly followed the LORD my God.'* Joshua 14:6-9

Caleb and Joshua had been given a promise because of their faithfulness when they spied out the land (Deuteronomy 1:36^{xvi}). The hearts of the other ten spies melted with fear at the sight of the Anakim, an extremely tall race of people, and they convinced

the people of Israel that there was no hope in taking the land (Numbers 13:31-33^{xvii}). Joshua and Caleb, however, wholly followed the LORD. They believed God's promises. They tried to convince the people that the protection of the enemy was removed and that the LORD would give them victory. The people responded by picking up stones to stone them (Numbers 14:10^{xviii}). Because of Joshua and Caleb's faithfulness, the LORD told Moses to tell them that they could choose any part of the land they wanted. The people were judged with forty years in the wilderness while the older generation died out. Only Joshua and Caleb would live to see the Promised Land. What a warning to not doubt the promises of God, and what an encouragement to have faith and believe (2 Chronicles 20:20^{xix})!

Caleb was forty years old when he first spied out the land. They were in the wilderness for another forty years, and then at least five years of warfare taking the Promised Land. Now at 85 years of age, Caleb could declare his strength was equal to that when he was 40. He chose the territory of the Anakim, the Goliath clan, the hill country with their great fortified cities. He said that the LORD *may* help him drive them out. He isn't cocky about it, but he knows God has promised to do it. He is sober minded. Unlike the older generation whose eyes were on the giants, Caleb's eyes were on the LORD. And with God's help he did get the job done, as we will see in the next chapter.

Three times in this chapter we read that **Caleb wholly followed the LORD his God** (verses 8^{xx}, 9^{xxi}, 14^{xxii}). God said he had a different spirit (Numbers 14:24^{xxiii}). That is a spirit that trusted the LORD and not the arm of the flesh.

In the Hebrew that (wholly following) is quite a striking word—more striking than in the English. It is a pictorial word in the Hebrew, and describes a ship going out at full sail. Why, that is the very keynote of Caleb from beginning to end. He was the man he was, from the beginning to the end, because he was out and out—because there were no limitations and provisions with him... He “went in” for God and His cause, like a ship in full sail. He flung every power of body, and soul, and spirit like a free sheet to the winds of God’s grace, and God’s Spirit, and God’s Providence. He “let go.”^{xxiv}

This zealous dedication is so meaningful to me that I asked that my grandson be named Caleb. Caleb means dog in Hebrew, but it implies faithfulness, and that is one thing God desires from us because He is always faithful to us (1 Corinthians 4:2^{xxv}). Here is an 85-year-old man who when given the choice of the best of the land took the hardest to obtain but most treasured piece of real estate. He says he is as tough as he ever was, and he'll do what others are afraid to do. He wholly followed the LORD his God and drove out the Anakim. So much for retirement. There is no retirement from serving the Lord as long as there is strength in our bones, nor do we retire from spiritual battles while we have breath. When we quit fighting, we lose, because the enemy never retires.

What stops us from being like Caleb and wholly following the LORD? When we consider what He has done for us, we realize He deserves nothing less. He reminds me of the Apostle Paul who declared, “*I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me. The life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me*” (Galatians 2:20).

The priests of Israel were commanded in the Laws of Moses to pass on their duties to younger people when they reached the age of fifty (Numbers 4:3^{xxvi}). But that doesn't

mean they retire. They just get a different assignment so others could experience serving in the temple.

Chapter 13 started the section of dividing the land because Joshua was no longer physically capable of continuing his role (Joshua 13:1^{xxvii}). But Caleb was still physically fit and saw that God was with him. Caleb declared, *¹⁰ And now, behold, the LORD has kept me alive, just as he said, these forty-five years since the time that the LORD spoke this word to Moses, while Israel walked in the wilderness. And now, behold, I am this day eighty-five years old. ¹¹ I am still as strong today as I was in the day that Moses sent me; my strength now is as my strength was then, for war and for going and coming.* Joshua 14:10,11 There was a job that others feared to do. He had the same faith now that he did 40 years earlier when he told the people in Numbers 13:30. *³⁰ But Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, "Let us go up at once and occupy it, for we are well able to overcome it."* He still had that fighting spirit of faith in God's power and faithfulness.

Spiritual vision means being able to see a situation from God's perspective, based on his self-revelation, and so to be able to go forward into that situation confident that God's purposes will indeed be fulfilled, trusting him and expecting him to work.^{xxviii}

Caleb continued, *¹² So now give me this hill country of which the LORD spoke on that day, for you heard on that day how the Anakim were there, with great fortified cities. It may be that the LORD will be with me, and I shall drive them out just as the LORD said."* ¹³ Then Joshua blessed him, and he gave Hebron to Caleb the son of Jephunneh for an inheritance. ¹⁴ Therefore Hebron became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite to this day, because he wholly followed the LORD, the God of Israel. Joshua 14:12-14

Caleb could see what God desired. He claimed it because he knew it was God's will for him, for he wholly followed the LORD. He would prove to the nation that what he said 40 years earlier was still true, God is able to drive them out. That is real vision. In our time leaders are encouraged to cast a vision, but too often it is what they desire to see happen. It is their personal hope and dream. Caleb's vision was based on his relationship with the LORD. He inspired faith in the faithfulness of God.

How we need men like Caleb today, men who with hearts after God, not looking to what is in it for them, but how they might be of service to the King they love and bring Him glory! As God would sovereignly ordain it, my devotional passage in My Utmost for His Highest expressed this very idea so well, that I want to share it in full.

It was based on Mark 10:28 KJV *Then Peter began to say unto Him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed Thee....*

Our Lord replies, in effect, that abandonment is for Himself, and not for what the disciples themselves will get from it. Beware of an abandonment which has the commercial spirit in it—'I am going to give myself to God because I want to be delivered from sin, because I want to be made holy.' All that is the result of being right with God, but that spirit is not of the essential nature of Christianity. Abandonment is not for anything at all. We have got so commercialized that we only go to God for something from Him, and not for Himself. It is like saying—'No, Lord, I don't want Thee, I want myself; but I want myself clean and filled with the Holy Ghost; I want to be put in Thy showroom and be able to say—"This is what God has done for me." 'If we only give up something to God because we want more back, there is nothing of the Holy Spirit in our

abandonment; it is miserable commercial self-interest. That we gain heaven, that we are delivered from sin, that we are made useful to God—these things never enter as considerations into real abandonment, which is a personal sovereign preference for Jesus Christ Himself.

When we come up against the barriers of natural relationship, where is Jesus Christ? Most of us desert Him—‘Yes, Lord, I did hear Thy call; but my mother is in the road, my wife, my self-interest, and I can go no further.’ ‘Then,’ Jesus says, ‘you cannot be My disciple.’

The test of abandonment is always over the neck of natural devotion. Go over it, and God’s own abandonment will embrace all those you had to hurt in abandoning. Beware of stopping short of abandonment to God. Most of us know abandonment in vision only.^{xxix}

Caleb was abandoned to God. He could have picked a nice pastureland that had already been taken with a stream and city with walls already built and ready to be occupied. But he knew that wasn’t God’s will. He had a heart to do whatever God wanted, no matter how difficult. He had a heart that matched his name, faithful. And when he sensed God wanted him to take the hardest area yet to be taken, he didn’t give his age as an excuse, but instead saw his physical strength remained for that purpose to which God had called him.

¹³ According to the commandment of the LORD to Joshua, he gave to Caleb the son of Jephunneh a portion among the people of Judah, Kiriath-arba, that is, Hebron (Arba was the father of Anak). ¹⁴ And Caleb drove out from there the three sons of Anak, Sheshai and Ahiman and Talmi, the descendants of Anak. Joshua 15:13-14 Hebron was special because it had the cave where the patriarchs were buried. Caleb conquered giants because God was with him. He did it because he knew God is faithful. He did it because he wholly followed the Lord and had a different spirit. What was true for the Levites was true for Caleb, the Lord was his reward. Is He your reward? There is nothing greater! Anything else falls way short and will never satisfy in the end. Nothing else is worthy of our faithful devotion (Revelation 5:12^{xxx}). If there is something else in your life that you are following, I humbly ask you to reconsider. The LORD says to those who follow wholly after Him what He said to Abraham, “I am your shield, your very great reward!” Genesis 15:3^{xxxi}

Questions

- 1 Why can we say we are heirs of the promise to Abraham?
- 2 How have the Jews blessed the world?
- 3 What did the Levites inherit?
- 4 Why is our inheritance the same?
- 5 Why was the land divided by lots?
- 6 Why were Caleb and Joshua exceptions?
- 7 Why didn’t the Israelites enter the first time?
- 8 How was Caleb different from other people?
- 9 How can abandonment to God be *miserable commercial self-interest*?
- 10 What did Caleb choose and why?
- 11 Who or what have you chosen to follow? Why?

ⁱ **Nehemiah 9:21 (ESV)**

²¹ Forty years you sustained them in the wilderness, and they lacked nothing. Their clothes did not wear out and their feet did not swell.

ⁱⁱ **Joshua 3:16 (ESV)**

¹⁶ the waters coming down from above stood and rose up in a heap very far away, at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan, and those flowing down toward the Sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, were completely cut off. And the people passed over opposite Jericho.

ⁱⁱⁱ **Joshua 10:11 (ESV)**

¹¹ And as they fled before Israel, while they were going down the ascent of Beth-horon, the LORD threw down large stones from heaven on them as far as Azekah, and they died. There were more who died because of the hailstones than the sons of Israel killed with the sword.

^{iv} **Deuteronomy 7:7-8 (ESV)**

⁷ It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, ⁸ but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

^v **Genesis 17:5 (ESV)**

⁵ No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations.

^{vi} **Genesis 12:3 (ESV)**

³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

^{vii} **Romans 4:16-17 (ESV)**

¹⁶ That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, ¹⁷ as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

^{viii} **Romans 3:1-2 (ESV)**

¹ Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision?

² Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God.

^{ix} **Joshua 14:3-4 (ESV)**

³ For Moses had given an inheritance to the two and one-half tribes beyond the Jordan, but to the Levites he gave no inheritance among them.

⁴ For the people of Joseph were two tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim. And no portion was given to the Levites in the land, but only cities to dwell in, with their pasturelands for their livestock and their substance.

^x **Luke 1:8-9 (ESV)**

⁸ Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty,

⁹ according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense.

^{xi} **Exodus 19:6 (ESV)**

⁶ and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel.”

^{xii} **2 Corinthians 2:14 (ESV)**

¹⁴ But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere.

^{xiii} **1 Peter 2:5 (ESV)**

⁵ you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

^{xiv} **Genesis 15:1 (NIV)**

¹ After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward." (see also KJV translation)

^{xv} **Numbers 34:13 (ESV)**

¹³ Moses commanded the people of Israel, saying, “This is the land that you shall inherit by lot, which the LORD has commanded to give to the nine tribes and to the half-tribe.

^{xvi} **Deuteronomy 1:36 (ESV)**

³⁶ except Caleb the son of Jephunneh. He shall see it, and to him and to his children I will give the land on which he has trodden, because he has wholly followed the LORD!

^{xvii} **Numbers 13:31-33 (ESV)**

³¹ Then the men who had gone up with him said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we are." ³² So they brought to the people of Israel a bad report of the land that they had spied out, saying, "The land, through which we have gone to spy it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people that we saw in it are of great height. ³³ And there we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak, who come from the Nephilim), and we seemed to ourselves like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them."

^{xviii} **Numbers 14:10 (ESV)**

¹⁰ Then all the congregation said to stone them with stones. But the glory of the LORD appeared at the tent of meeting to all the people of Israel.

^{xix} **2 Chronicles 20:20 (KJV)**

²⁰ And they rose early in the morning, and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa: and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and said, Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.

^{xx} **Joshua 14:8 (ESV)**

⁸ But my brothers who went up with me made the heart of the people melt; yet I wholly followed the LORD my God.

^{xxi} **Joshua 14:9 (ESV)**

⁹ And Moses swore on that day, saying, 'Surely the land on which your foot has trodden shall be an inheritance for you and your children forever, because you have wholly followed the LORD my God.'

^{xxii} **Joshua 14:14 (ESV)**

¹⁴ Therefore Hebron became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite to this day, because he wholly followed the LORD, the God of Israel.

^{xxiii} **Numbers 14:24 (ESV)**

²⁴ But my servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit and has followed me fully, I will bring into the land into which he went, and his descendants shall possess it.

^{xxiv} John McNeill

^{xxv} **1 Corinthians 4:2 (ESV)**

² Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful.

^{xxvi} **Numbers 4:3 (ESV)**

³ from thirty years old up to fifty years old, all who can come on duty, to do the work in the tent of meeting.

^{xxvii} **Joshua 13:1 (ESV)**

¹ Now Joshua was old and advanced in years, and the LORD said to him, "You are old and advanced in years, and there remains yet very much land to possess.

^{xxviii} Preaching the Word - Joshua: People of God's Purpose.

^{xxix} Chambers, O. (1986). *My Utmost for His Highest*. Grand Rapids, MI: Oswald Chambers Publications; Marshall Pickering.

^{xxx} **Revelation 5:12 (ESV)**

¹² saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!"

^{xxxi} **Genesis 15:1 (NIV)**

¹ After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward."