

Joshua 13:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Now Joshua was old and stricken in years; and the LORD said unto him, Thou art old and stricken in years, and there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed.

Analysis

This verse marks transition from conquest to settlement, introducing the land distribution section (chapters 13-21). The phrase 'Joshua was old and stricken in years' (Yehoshua zaqen ba bayamim, יהושע זקן בא בַּיָּמִים) literally means 'Joshua was old, coming in days'—advanced in age. God's statement 'Thou art old' acknowledges human limitation; Joshua's mortality required completing land distribution before death. The phrase 'there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed' (haarets nisharah harbeh meod, הָאֶרֶץ נִשְׁאַרָה הַרְבֵּה מְאֹד) creates tension: conquest was comprehensive (11:23), yet much remained unconquered. This resolves by understanding that major Canaanite power was broken, but mop-up operations continued. The unfinished conquest resulted partly from Israel's faithfulness limits and partly from God's intentional gradualism preventing rapid depopulation (Exodus 23:29-30). From a Reformed perspective, this illustrates Christian experience: positional victory accomplished (Christ defeated sin and Satan), yet experiential conquest continues throughout life. Perfect glorification awaits, but present sanctification involves ongoing spiritual warfare.

Historical Context

Joshua was approximately 110 years old at death (24:29), making him perhaps 100-105 at this point. Having led Israel for roughly 25 years since Moses' death, Joshua faced mortality requiring urgent land distribution. The 'very much land' included Philistine territory (13:2-3), northern coastal regions (13:4-6), and various

pockets of Canaanite resistance throughout the land. God's strategy for gradual conquest appears in Exodus 23:29-30 and Deuteronomy 7:22—immediate total depopulation would allow wild animals to overrun the land before Israel could settle it. Measured conquest allowed agricultural development keeping pace with territorial expansion. Archaeological evidence shows continuing Canaanite presence in certain regions (like Philistine cities and Phoenician coastal areas) throughout Israel's history, consistent with Joshua's account of incomplete conquest. The tension between 'whole land taken' (11:23) and 'much land remains' (13:1) reflects military versus settlement realities: major resistance broken, but complete occupation ongoing. This establishes pattern for Judges period where tribal failures to complete conquest brought recurring conflicts.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. What 'unconquered territory' in your spiritual life requires ongoing attention despite positional victory in Christ?
2. How does Joshua's mortality pressing land distribution challenge you to complete urgent kingdom work while you're able?
3. What does gradual conquest teach about God's wisdom in progressive sanctification rather than instant perfection?

Interlinear Text

וַיְהוֹשֻׁעַ זָקַן נִתְּנָה בְּ אֶתְּ בְּמַ יָּמִים וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה הִוא
Now Joshua **unto him Thou art old** **and stricken** **in years** **said** **and the LORD**
H3091 H2204 H935 H3117 H559 H3068

אֶל יְיָ זָקַן נִתְּנָה בְּ אֶתְּ בְּמַ יָּמִים וְהָאָרֶץ
H413 H859 **unto him Thou art old** **and stricken** **in years** **land**
 H2204 H935 H3117 H776

וְנִשְׁאַרְהָ הַרְבֵּה מְאֹד לְרִשְׁתָּהּ:
and there remaineth **much** **yet very** **to be possessed**
H7604 H7235 H3966 H3423

Additional Cross-References

Joshua 14:10 (References Lord): And now, behold, the LORD hath kept me alive, as he said, these forty and five years, even since the LORD spake this word unto Moses, while the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness: and now, lo, I am this day fourscore and five years old.

Deuteronomy 31:3 (References Lord): The LORD thy God, he will go over before thee, and he will destroy these nations from before thee, and thou shalt possess them: and Joshua, he shall go over before thee, as the LORD hath said.

Genesis 18:11 (Parallel theme): Now Abraham and Sarah were old and well stricken in age; and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women.

Luke 1:7 (Parallel theme): And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years.

Joshua 24:29 (References Lord): And it came to pass after these things, that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being an hundred and ten years old.