

Joshua 13:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And all the cities of Sihon king of the Amorites, which reigned in Heshbon, unto the border of the children of Ammon;

Analysis

And all the cities of Sihon king of the Amorites, which reigned in Heshbon, unto the border of the children of Ammon. This verse describes part of the territorial inheritance given to the tribe of Reuben east of the Jordan River. The mention of "Sihon king of the Amorites" recalls Israel's first major military victory after the wilderness wandering (Numbers 21:21-31; Deuteronomy 2:24-37). Sihon's defeat demonstrated God's faithfulness to fulfill His promises of giving Israel the land.

Heshbon served as Sihon's royal city and became a significant border town between Israelite territory and the Ammonites. The geographical detail emphasizes God's meticulous fulfillment of His covenant promises—every city, every boundary was precisely as God intended. The reference to "the border of the children of Ammon" indicates respect for divinely established boundaries; God commanded Israel not to harass Ammon because He had given that territory to Lot's descendants (Deuteronomy 2:19).

Theologically, this verse reminds us that God's promises involve both general principles and specific details. He is concerned not only with broad redemptive purposes but also with particular circumstances affecting His people's daily lives. The careful delineation of tribal inheritances demonstrates God's just distribution, orderly administration, and faithful provision. For Christians, this points to the greater inheritance we receive in Christ (Ephesians 1:11, 14)—an inheritance that is precisely planned, justly distributed, and eternally secure.

Historical Context

The conquest of Sihon occurred approximately 1406 BCE as Israel approached Canaan from the east after forty years of wilderness wandering. Sihon had previously conquered Moabite territory and established his kingdom in the Transjordan region. When he refused Israel passage and attacked them, God delivered him into Israel's hands, giving them their first territorial possession.

The allocation of Transjordan territory to Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh (Numbers 32) was conditional on these tribes' participation in the conquest of Canaan proper. Joshua 13 occurs during the later phase of the conquest as Joshua, now elderly, divides the land among the tribes. The careful recording of boundaries and cities served both legal (establishing property rights) and theological (documenting covenant fulfillment) purposes.

Archaeological evidence confirms the existence of significant Amorite settlements in this region during the Late Bronze Age. Heshbon (modern Tell Hesban) shows occupational levels corresponding to this period. The historical precision of these geographical details demonstrates the biblical text's reliability and the historical reality of God's covenant faithfulness to Israel. These concrete, verifiable details anchor faith in the God who acts in real history, in real places, for real people.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does God's attention to specific territorial details encourage you about His involvement in the particular circumstances of your life?
2. What does the fulfillment of these ancient promises teach us about trusting God's promises for the future?

3. How does the respect for divinely established boundaries (like Ammon's territory) inform Christian ethics regarding God's sovereign distribution of resources and opportunities?
4. In what ways does the Old Testament inheritance of land prefigure and illuminate the New Testament's teaching about our eternal inheritance in Christ?
5. How should the historical concreteness of God's covenant faithfulness to Israel shape our confidence in His faithfulness to the church?

Interlinear Text

אֲשֶׁר	פְּאָמָר	יְהוָה	לְכָל	עָרִים	סִיחוֹן		
H3605	And all the cities	of Sihon	king	of the Amorites	H834		
H5892		H5511	H4428	H567			
מֶלֶךְ	עַד	בְּחִשְׁבָּה	וְ	גַּבְּרָה	וְ	בָּנִים	עָמֹדים
which reigned	in Heshbon	H5704	unto the border	of the children	of Ammon		
H4427	H2809	H1366		H1121	H5983		

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