

Joshua 18:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And there remained among the children of Israel seven tribes, which had not yet received their inheritance.

Analysis

And there remained among the children of Israel seven tribes, which had not yet received their inheritance—This verse introduces a troubling reality: after the initial conquests and allotments to Judah, Ephraim, and Manasseh (chapters 14-17), seven tribes remained without their assigned territories. The Hebrew *notru* (נוֹתְרָו, "remained") suggests they were left behind, passively waiting rather than actively possessing. The phrase *asher lo-challqu et-nachalatam* (אשר לא-חוללו את-נחלתם, "which had not yet received their inheritance") indicates delay in receiving what God had already promised.

The seven tribes—Benjamin, Simeon, Zebulun, Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, and Dan—represent the majority of Israel, yet they had not possessed their portions. This delay stemmed not from God's unfaithfulness but from Israel's passivity and lack of faith. Joshua's rebuke in verse 3 makes clear this was culpable negligence: "How long are ye slack to go to possess the land?" The same unbelief that prevented the Exodus generation from entering Canaan (Numbers 13-14) now hindered the conquest generation from completing their inheritance. God's promises require active faith and obedient action, not passive waiting.

Historical Context

The delay described here occurred after the initial conquest phase (chapters 1-12) and the allotment to the two-and-a-half Transjordanian tribes (chapter 13), Caleb (14:6-15), Judah (chapter 15), and the Joseph tribes (chapters 16-17). The

tabernacle had been set up at Shiloh (18:1), establishing a central worship location in the conquered territory. Shiloh, located in the hill country of Ephraim about 20 miles north of Jerusalem, would serve as Israel's religious center for over 300 years until the ark was captured by Philistines (1 Samuel 4). The seven remaining tribes' failure to claim their inheritance meant large portions of Canaan remained under Canaanite control, creating the incomplete conquest situation that plagued the judges period. Archaeological surveys show that Israelite settlement in the hill country increased gradually over the 13th-11th centuries BCE, consistent with a protracted rather than instantaneous conquest.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. What spiritual inheritance has God promised you in Christ that you have not yet actively appropriated through faith and obedience?
2. How does the seven tribes' passivity warn against waiting for God to act when He has already commanded us to step forward in faith?
3. What would it look like in your life to move from passively 'remaining' in unfulfilled promises to actively possessing what God has already given?

Interlinear Text

לֹא אָשָׁר יְשִׁבָּא לְבָנָיו
And there remained among the children of Israel
H3498 H1121 H3478 H834 H3808

שְׁבָטִים: שְׁבָע הַנּוֹלָט מִאֶת
which had not yet received their inheritance seven tribes
H2505 H853 H5159 H7651 H7626

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