

CHAPTER 17

The half tribe of Manasseh comes next to be provided for; and here we have,

- I. The families of that tribe that were to be portioned (v. 1-6).
- II. The country that fell to their lot (v. 7-13).
- III. The joint request of the two tribes that descended from Joseph, for the enlargement of their lot, and Joshua's answer to that request (v. 14-18).

<670>JOSHUA 17:1-6

THE INHERITANCE OF JOSEPH'S CHILDREN

Manasseh was itself but one half of the tribe of Joseph, and yet was divided and subdivided.

1. It was divided into two parts, one already settled on the other side Jordan, consisting of those who were the posterity of Machir, v. 1. This Machir was born to Manasseh in Egypt; there he had signalized himself as a man of war, probably in the contests between the Ephraimites and the men of Gath, <372>1 Chronicles 7:21. His warlike disposition descended to his posterity, and therefore Moses gave them Gilead and Bashan, on the other side Jordan, of which before, <613>Joshua 13:31. It is here said that the lot came to Manasseh, *for he was the first-born of Joseph*. Bishop Patrick thinks it should be translated, *though he was the first-born of Joseph*, and then the meaning is plain, that the second lot was for Manasseh, because, though he was the first-born, yet Jacob had preferred Ephraim before him. See the names of those heads of the families that settled on the other side Jordan, <152>1 Chronicles 5:24.

2. That part on this side Jordan as subdivided into ten families, v. 5. There were six sons of Gilead here named (v. 2), the same that are recorded <951>Numbers 26:30-32, only that he who is there called *Jezeer* is here called *Abiezer*. Five of these sons had each of them their portion; the sixth, which was Hopher, had his male line cut off in his son Zelophehad, who left

daughters only, five in number, of whom we have often read, and these five had each of them a portion; though perhaps, they claiming under Hopher, all their five portions were but equal to one of the portions of the five sons. Or if Hopher had other sons besides Zelophehad, in whom the name of his family was kept up, their posterity married to the daughters of Zelophehad the elder brother, and in their right had these portions assigned them. See ~~GEN 2~~ Numbers 36:12. Here is,

(1.) The claim which the daughters of Zelophehad made, grounded upon the command God gave to Moses concerning them, v. 4. They had themselves, when they were young, pleaded their own cause before Moses, and obtained the grant of an inheritance with their brethren, and now they would not lose the benefit of that grant for want of speaking to Joshua, but seasonably put in their demand themselves, as it should seem, and not their husbands for them.

(2.) The assignment of their portions according to their claim. Joshua knew very well what God had ordered in their case, and did not object that they having not served in the wars of Canaan there was no reason why they should share in the possessions of Canaan, but readily *gave them as inheritance among the brethren of their father*. And now they reaped the benefit of their own pious zeal and prudent forecast in this matter. Thus those who take care in the wilderness of this world to make sure to themselves a place in the inheritance of the saints in light will certainly have the comfort of it in the other world, while those that neglect it now will lose it for ever.

~~GEN 2~~ JOSHUA 17:7-13

THE INHERITANCE OF JOSEPH'S CHILDREN

We have here a short account of the lot of this half tribe. It reached from Jordan on the east to the great sea on the west; on the south it lay all along contiguous to Ephraim, but on the north it abutted upon Asher and Issachar. Asher lay north-west, and Issachar north-east, which seems to be the meaning of that (v. 10), that they (that is, Manasseh and Ephraim, as related to it, both together making the tribe of Joseph) met in Asher on the north and Issachar on the east, for Ephraim itself reached not those tribes. Some things are particularly observed concerning this lot: —

1. That there was great communication between this tribe and that of Ephraim. The city of Tappuah belonged to Ephraim, but the country adjoining to Manasseh (v. 8); there were likewise many cities of Ephraim that lay within the border of Manasseh (v. 9), of which before, ~~(1660)~~ Joshua 16:9.
2. That Manasseh likewise had cities with their appurtenances in the tribes of Issachar and Asher (v. 11), God so ordering it, that though every tribe had its peculiar inheritance, which might not be alienated from it, yet they should thus intermix one with another, to keep up mutual acquaintance and correspondence among the tribes, and to give occasion for the doing of good offices one to another, as became those who, though of different tribes, were all one Israel, and were bound to love as brethren.
3. That they suffered the Canaanites to live among them, contrary to the command of God, serving their own ends by conniving at them, for they made them tributaries, v. 12, 13. The Ephraimites had done the same (~~(1660)~~ Joshua 16:10), and from them perhaps the Manassites learned it, and with their example excused themselves in it. The most remarkable person of this half tribe in after-time was Gideon, whose great actions were done within this lot. He was of the family of Abiezer; Cesarea was in this lot, and Antipatris, famed in the latter ages of the Jewish state.

~~(1674)~~ JOSHUA 17:14-18

THE INHERITANCE OF JOSEPH'S CHILDREN

Here,

I. The children of Joseph quarrel with their lot; if they had had any just cause to quarrel with it, we have reason to think Joshua would have relieved them, by adding to it, or altering it, which it does not appear he did. It is probable, because Joshua was himself of the tribe of Ephraim, they promised themselves that they should have some particular favour shown them, and should not be confined to the decision of the lot so closely as the other tribes; but Joshua makes them know that in the discharge of his office, as a public person, he had no more regard to his own tribe than to any other, but would administer impartially, without favour or affection, wherein he has left an excellent example to all in public

trusts. It was a very competent provision that was made for them, as much, for aught that appears, as they were able to manage, and yet they call it in disdain but *one lot*, as if that which was assigned to them both was scarcely sufficient for one. The word for *complainers* (~~אמלל~~ Jude 1:16) is *mempsimoiroi*, blamers of their lot: —

1. That they were very numerous, through the blessing of God upon them (v. 14): *I am a great people, for the Lord has blessed me*; and we have reason to hope that he that hath sent mouths will send meat. “*I am a great people*, and in so small a lot shall not have *room to thrive*.” Yet observe, when they speak thankfully of their present increase, they do not speak confidently of the continuance of it. “The Lord has blessed me hitherto, however he may see fit to deal with me for the future.” The uncertainty of what may be must not make us unthankful for what has been and is done in kindness to us.

2. That a good part of that country which had now fallen to their lot was in the hands of the Canaanites, and that they were formidable enemies, who brought into the field of battle *chariots of iron* (v. 16), that is, chariots with long scythes fastened to the sides of them, or the axle-tree, which made great destruction of all that came in their way, mowing them down like corn. They urge that though they had a good portion assigned them, yet it was in bad hands, and they could not come to the possession of it, wishing to have their lot in those countries that were more thoroughly reduced than this was.

II. Joshua endeavours to reconcile them to their lot. He owns they were a *great people*, and being two tribes ought to have more than *one lot only* (v. 17), but tells them that what had fallen to their share would be a sufficient lot for them both, if they would but work and fight. They desired a lot in which they might indulge themselves in ease and luxury. “No,” says Joshua, “you must not count upon that; *in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread* is a sentence in force even in Canaan itself.” He retorts their own argument, that they were a *great people*. “If so, you are the better able to help yourselves, and have the less reason to expect help from others. If thou hast many mouths to be filled, thou hast twice as many hands to be employed; earn, and then eat.”

1. He bids them work for more (v. 15): “*Get thee up to the wood-country*, which is within thy own border, and let all hands be set to work to cut

down the trees, rid the rough lands, and make them, with art and industry, good arable ground.” Note, Many wish for larger possessions who do not cultivate and make the best of what they have, think they should have more talents given them who do not trade with those with which they are entrusted. Most people's poverty is the effect of their idleness; would they dig, they need not beg.

2. He bids them fight for more (v. 17, 18), when they pleaded that they could not come at the wood-lands he spoke of because in the valley between them and it were Canaanites whom they durst not enter the lists with. “Never fear them,” said Joshua, “thou hast God on thy side, and *thou shalt drive out the Canaanites*, if thou wilt set about it in good earnest, *though they have iron chariots.*” We straiten ourselves by apprehending the difficulties in the way of our enlargement to be greater than really they are. What can be insuperable to faith and holy resolution?