



▶ *Unwavering Determination* ◀

CALEB FOLLOWED THE LORD COMPLETELY AND RECEIVED WHAT GOD HAD PROMISED HIM DECADES EARLIER.

JOSHUA 14:1-15

A lot of us are like the little boy who prayed, “God give me patience, and give it to me right now!” The Bible teaches us that we need to learn to trust God’s promises and at the same time trust God’s timing. For instance, thousands of years passed from the time God first promised the coming of the Messiah until Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Yet the Bible says God sent His Son at just the right time (Gal. 4:4). We can depend on God to keep His promises—no matter how long He takes to do so.



What have you learned about trusting God’s timing?

UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

JOSHUA 13:1-21:45

Joshua 1-5 records God's preparation of Israel for the conquest of Canaan. Chapters 6-12 explain Joshua's military strategy and records the specific cities, lands, and peoples conquered. Joshua 11:23 states, "Joshua took the entire land, in keeping with all that the LORD had told Moses. Joshua then gave it as an inheritance to Israel according to their tribal allotments. After this, the land had rest from war." It is important to note that the statement, "Joshua took the entire land," means he defeated all of the enemies he fought and took all of their lands. However, Joshua did not fight everyone, nor did he conquer all of the promised land. Joshua got too old to finish the work he had begun (13:1-7). The Lord promised Joshua that He Himself would drive out the remaining Canaanites. Thus, God instructed Joshua to go ahead and distribute the land to the tribes. Chapters 13-21 record how Joshua did this.

Most allocations of the tribal territories are described using combinations of the listings of towns and geographic features of the land, linking them in order to trace the boundaries. Lists like these were common in administrative texts in the ancient Near East. Some scholars believe these similarities suggest these records of tribal allotments would have contained the legal force of a treaty. When new towns sprung up in the various territories, they were added to the document throughout Israel's history. This procedure would update and recognize the existence of new settlements in those tribal areas for as long as Israel possessed them. Consequently, the tribal allotments served as a record of God's faithfulness to keep the promises He made in His covenant with Israel.

In Joshua 20:1-21:45, Joshua assigned the Levitical cities and the cities of refuge. The Levites did not receive a land inheritance. Typically, four cities from each tribe were Levitical cities. The cities still belonged to the tribes, but the priests could live there and be provided fields to pasture and farm. Being spread out among the tribes provided the priests the opportunity to teach the law to the people, one of their most important responsibilities. The six cities of refuge were Levitical cities that provided sanctuary for a person who accidentally killed someone (20:2-6).

 **Read Joshua 14:1-15. Take note of how Caleb's faithfulness to God had an impact on others.**

EXPLORE **THE TEXT**

OBEDIENCE (JOSH. 14:1-5)

¹ **The Israelites received these portions that the priest Eleazar, Joshua son of Nun, and the family heads of the Israelite tribes gave them in the land of Canaan. ² Their inheritance was by lot as the LORD commanded through Moses for the nine and a half tribes, ³ because Moses had given the inheritance to the two and a half tribes beyond the Jordan. But he gave no inheritance among them to the Levites. ⁴ The descendants of Joseph became two tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim. No portion of the land was given to the Levites except cities to live in, along with pasturelands for their cattle and livestock. ⁵ So the Israelites did as the LORD commanded Moses, and they divided the land.**

VERSES 1-2

Verse 1 introduces the individuals who were central to the process of distributing the allotments of land to each tribe. Eleazar's name appearing before Joshua's name is not coincidental. *Eleazar* was Aaron's third son and Aaron's successor as the high priest. He had assisted Moses with a census of the people as they prepared to enter the land of Canaan. He also served Moses as an advisor. When Moses commissioned Joshua to be Moses's successor, Eleazar consulted the Lord before the entire congregation of Israel to demonstrate to Israel that Joshua was God's choice to be Moses's successor (Num. 27:18-23).

Therefore, it is no surprise Eleazar was a key figure on this momentous occasion. He served as a visual reminder that God was faithful to keep the promises of His covenant with Abraham and his descendants. It is for this reason that God had instructed Moses that, when it was time to allocate the land to the tribes, He wanted Joshua, Eleazar, and one leader from each of the tribes to distribute the land to the tribes (Num. 34:16-29). Thus, the information in this verse is important because it highlights God's faithfulness and demonstrates how Joshua and Israel's leaders meticulously obeyed God's instructions. It is also noteworthy that this is the first time in the book of Joshua that the promised land is referred to as *the land of Canaan*.

The lands were allocated to the *nine and a half tribes* still waiting for their tribal inheritance. These were to be determined

according to the Lord's instructions first given to Moses and handed down to Joshua. The central role of Eleazar in the distribution of the tribal allotments was not the only indicator that it was the Lord who was central to what was taking place. God had commanded Moses that Israel's tribal allotments were to be determined **by lot** (Num. 26:52-56; 33:54).

Lots were used to determine God's will in a matter. For example, the high priests used the Urim and Thummim as sacred lots to receive a divine answer (Ex. 28:15-30). In the New Testament, the apostles used the lot to replace Judas with Matthias (Acts 1:26). No one is sure what lots looked like or how people knew how to interpret them. What is most important is that Scripture indicates the outcome of the lot was not random. Proverbs 16:33 states, "The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD." Therefore, the determining of each tribe's allotment was not a matter of chance; God was in control of the procedure and outcomes.

VERSES 3-4

Verses 3-4 help clear up the breakdown of the tribes and their allotments. Jacob had twelve sons. From oldest to youngest they were Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, and Benjamin. Joseph received a double inheritance from his father, so Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, became the heads of two tribes. That totals thirteen. However, the tribe of Levi did not receive an inheritance of land. Because the Levites were commissioned to serve the Lord at the tabernacle and then later at the temple, their special inheritance was "the LORD . . . just as he promised them" (Deut. 18:1-2; Josh. 13:33). Joshua 21:1-41 indicates forty-eight cities distributed throughout the twelve tribal allotments were designated for the Levites with **pasturelands for their cattle and livestock**. Rabbinical records indicate they served in a rotation at the tabernacle and then the temple two weeks out of the year. The rest of the time would have been dedicated to teaching God's law where they lived.

At their request, Moses had already promised land allotments east of the Jordan River to **two and a half tribes** on the condition they joined the other tribes in the conquest of the land west of the Jordan (Num. 32:28-33). These were the tribes of Gad, Reuben, and half of the tribe of **Manasseh**. Joshua reconfirmed this promise with them when the conquest was about to commence in Joshua 1:12-18. When the conquest was complete, they returned to their lands east of the Jordan (Josh. 13:8-13).

VERSE 5

Every preceding verse demonstrates how Joshua, Eleazar, and the elders of the tribes of Israel did exactly as the Lord had commanded them through Moses. Verse 5 concludes this section accentuating that all of ***the Israelites did as the LORD commanded Moses***—in contrast to the previous generation with the exceptions of Joshua and Caleb. None of God’s commands are trivial. Consequently, it was because of the people’s obedience that the Israelites enjoyed the blessing of dividing the land.



How was the dividing of the land a demonstration of trust in God and His wisdom?

None of God’s commands are trivial.

DEVOTION (JOSH. 14:6-9)

⁶ The descendants of Judah approached Joshua at Gilgal, and Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him, “You know what the LORD promised Moses the man of God at Kadesh-barnea about you and me. ⁷ I was forty years old when Moses the LORD’s servant sent me from Kadesh-barnea to scout the land, and I brought back an honest report. ⁸ My brothers who went with me caused the people to lose heart, but I followed the LORD my God completely. ⁹ On that day Moses swore to me, “The land where you have set foot will be an inheritance for you and your descendants forever, because you have followed the LORD my God completely.””

VERSES 6-9

Before his death, Jacob had prophesied what was to come concerning his descendants. He foretold that Judah’s brothers would praise Judah and bow down to him. Jacob also said that Judah would conquer his enemies, become king, and the nations would obey him (Gen. 49:8-12). When the tribal allotments were distributed, it is no surprise that Judah received the largest portion of land with the most detailed description of all the tribes. There should be no

surprise that ●**Caleb** was a descendant of Judah. Caleb approached Joshua and reminded him of Moses’s promise at Kadesh-barnea.

After the Israelites left Mount Sinai and were readying themselves to go into the promised land, they settled at Kadesh-barnea, an oasis south of Canaan. Then Moses sent twelve spies, one from each tribe, to scout out the land so that they would know what to expect when they entered it. When the spies returned, ten of them said that while the land was everything God had said it was, Israel would not be able to defeat its inhabitants. The two spies who said Israel could defeat them because the Lord would give them the victory were Joshua and Caleb. Nevertheless, the people believed the report of the ten spies instead of Joshua and Caleb (Num. 13–14).

Numbers 32:12 indicates that “None except Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite and Joshua the son of Nun” followed the Lord completely. “Completely” means “wholeheartedly.” Here, Caleb repeated the phrase that he **followed the LORD . . . completely** with the same wording in Hebrew. It was because of their unwavering faith and devotion to God that Joshua and Caleb, along with their families, were the only ones God permitted to enter the promised land from that generation. In Numbers 14:24, God promised He would bring Caleb into the promised land and that his descendants would receive their inheritance there because Caleb “had a different spirit” and “remained loyal to me.” In these verses, Caleb reminded Joshua of this promise when he was **forty years old**.



What does it look like to follow the Lord wholeheartedly?



KEY DOCTRINE: *God*

To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience.
(See Deuteronomy 6:4-5; Luke 14:27.)

INHERITANCE (JOSH. 14:10-15)

¹⁰ **“As you see, the LORD has kept me alive these forty-five years as he promised, since the LORD spoke this word to Moses while Israel was journeying in the wilderness. Here I am today,**

eighty-five years old.¹¹ I am still as strong today as I was the day Moses sent me out. My strength for battle and for daily tasks is now as it was then.¹² Now give me this hill country the LORD promised me on that day, because you heard then that the Anakim are there, as well as large fortified cities. Perhaps the LORD will be with me and I will drive them out as the LORD promised.”¹³ Then Joshua blessed Caleb son of Jephunneh and gave him Hebron as an inheritance.¹⁴ Therefore, Hebron still belongs to Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite as an inheritance today because he followed the LORD, the God of Israel, completely.¹⁵ Hebron’s name used to be Kiriath-arba; Arba was the greatest man among the Anakim. After this, the land had rest from war.

VERSE 10

Caleb was forty years old when he saw the promised land for himself. He was eager to receive the inheritance God had promise him and his family. Regrettably, Caleb was forced to wait *forty-five years* to pass before he could receive this inheritance while he wandered for forty of those years in the wilderness, not because of any wrong he had done but because of the lack of faith and the disobedience of others. The remaining five years indicate that the Israelites had already been involved in the conquest of Canaan for at least five years.

Caleb’s trust in the Lord’s faithfulness never wavered. He realized that God had kept him alive for this and stressed that now it was time. He had waited long enough, and with the Lord’s help Caleb was ready to claim the inheritance the Lord had promised him.

Caleb’s trust in the Lord’s faithfulness never wavered.

VERSES 11-12

Not only did the Lord keep Caleb alive at eighty-five years old, but He also kept Caleb as ***strong*** as he was forty-five years prior when Moses sent him out to scout the land of Canaan with Joshua and the other ten spies. Caleb was not too old or too weak to do what God had promised him he could do. Moreover, Caleb was eager to go to the ***hill country***, the location of the fortified cities of the ***Anakim***. Caleb was eager to take on the same giants that had

terrified the other ten spies who caused Israel to be too frightened to trust God and conquer the land. Joshua 11:21-22 indicates Israel had already defeated the Anakim, but some had gotten away only to return later. Caleb was ready and eager to go in and finish them off.

VERSES 13-15

After hearing Caleb's request, **Joshua blessed Caleb** and gave him the land he requested as his inheritance. Joshua's blessing is significant. As God's servant and spokesman, Joshua's blessing communicated to Caleb that he indeed would experience God's favor as he faced the Anakim. When the writer wrote this account, the land still remained the inheritance of Caleb's family.

Furthermore, the city Caleb took in the hill country had been formerly named **Kiriath-arba**, meaning the city of Arba. Arba had been the most powerful man of the Anakim, but he was no more. The city was renamed **•Hebron**, meaning "the place of alliance," possibly commemorating how after forty years the once fearful Israelite tribes finally trusted God and joined together to conquer the land of Canaan.



Which of God's promises do you rely upon when facing unknown challenges?




BIBLE SKILL: Use a cross reference to learn more about what the Bible says about a particular subject.

The word "inheritance" essentially refers to a "legal transmission of property following death." However, the Hebrew terms translated "inheritance" did not necessarily presuppose a death; they could be used in other ways. Determine how many times "inheritance" or a similar term appears in Joshua 14:1-15. Then read and reflect on these verses to learn more about how it's used in Scripture: Joshua 1:15; 13:33; Jeremiah 10:16; Matthew 19:29; 25:34; and Romans 8:17.

APPLY THE TEXT

- + We will face daily opportunities to obey or disobey God's instructions.
- + We can be assured that God knows and rewards those who follow Him wholeheartedly.
- + We can be assured of God's presence and aid when we follow Him wholeheartedly.

 **What are some of the things people face daily that pose an opportunity to obey or disobey God's instructions? What can people do to prepare themselves for these situations before they face them?**

 **Is there any situation in your life at the present where you are faced with a decision to obey or disobey God's instructions? What should you remember and do in order to make the right decision and obey God?**

 **Memorize Joshua 14:8.**

Prayer Needs
