

# *Unwavering Determination*

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

My pastor's mom and dad are both pillars in our church. Neither one of them lead Bible studies or do anything in the spotlight, but they always conscientiously serve behind the scenes. They are doers. Both are in their eighties but are not afraid of new challenges. Most people in the church don't even know their real names. They go by Moppy and Poppy, which is what our pastor and his siblings called them as children. Moppy is always there with a gift, a visit, flowers, whatever the need. Poppy cleans, paints, mows, and a host of other things. No matter what the church is doing, they are always "all in." And they have been doing this for decades. Their son, now fifty, started the church from his living room twenty years ago, and his mom and dad served in churches for decades before that.

At our annual business meeting this year, the congregation presented them with an award honoring their decades of selfless service. After the recognition was over, I tried to hunt Moppy down to thank her. I couldn't find her anywhere. I finally tracked her down at the place I should have gone to first, the church kitchen. She was buried in dishes, washing pans from the potluck we all enjoyed before the business meeting. She was embarrassed about her award and wouldn't even talk about her recognition. Besides, she had work to do. Our pastor received his call to ministry as a grade schooler. I now know why, with parents like that.

That can-do attitude reminds me of today's story of Caleb. He was all in, ready for the hardest job, feeling as confident as he felt when he was a young man. God had promised Caleb that his inheritance would not just be for him, but for many generations to follow (Num. 14:24). He was not afraid to act on that promise, even in his eighties.

Our faith is not ours alone, but can transform the faith of generations. It can provide a lasting legacy, passed down from generation to generation. The New Testament is full of references to the inheritance received as believers. Second Timothy 1:1-14 mentions the mother and grandmother of Timothy, who passed their faith down to their children. Ephesians 1:14 describes the Holy Spirit as a down payment of the

believer's ultimate inheritance. First Peter says that we were redeemed from the empty life inherited from our ancestors. That redemption is due solely to the precious blood of Christ (1 Pet. 1:18-21).



## Joshua 13:1–21:45

The book of Joshua divides roughly in half. Chapters 1–13 detail the conquest of Canaan by Joshua and the Israelites. Chapters 13–21 survey the distribution of land as it was allocated to the twelve tribes of Israel. The close of chapter 21 provides a theologically rich summary of how God gave Israel all the land He had promised their ancestors, and how He had given His people rest from their enemies. Not a single one of God's promises to the house of Israel failed (Josh. 21:43-45).

At the close of chapter 12, the writer provides a summary list of the kings of the eastern side of the Jordan (Sihon, Og), who had already been conquered by Israel, followed by another list of the thirty-one kings of the west that Israel defeated. These lists move the narrative from conquest to settlement.

Chapter 13 begins by saying that Joshua was old and advanced in years (13:1; see 23:1), and reaches back to the very first verse of the book, which alludes to Moses's death. This chapter lists the places in Canaan that remained unconquered: Philistia, Lebanon, Sidon, and several others (13:1-7). There was still work to be done. It speaks to the inheritance of the eastern tribes: Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh (vv. 8-33). This chapter also focuses on the Levites. They would receive no land inheritance, only the food offerings provided in the law (v. 14), because the LORD Himself was their inheritance (v. 33).

Chapter 14 describes the process of how land was distributed to the various tribes by inheritance. The word "inheritance" first appears in Joshua 1:6 and is used more than fifty times in the book, usually referring to land inheritance. These allotted lands were distributed by Eleazar and Joshua. The promises of these lands go back to God's promises to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3; 15:7-21). This allocation of land took place five years after Israel's entry into Canaan (Josh. 14:10).

Chapters 16–17 change focus from Judah to Joseph; specifically, the tribes of Joseph's sons Ephraim (16:5-10) and Manasseh (17:1-13). In Genesis 49, Jacob blessed his twelve sons. This blessing treats Joseph as

a single tribe. Judah and Joseph are particularly prominent there as well. Joshua 17:14-18 details how Joseph's tribes requested and received from Joshua additional land in which they were allowed to settle because of the tribes' large populations.

In chapter 18, everyone assembled at Shiloh for the distribution of lands to the remaining tribes (18:1-19:48). Lastly, Joshua received his portion in the hill country of Ephraim (19:49-50).

These final chapters also mention the cities of refuge on both sides of the Jordan, where fugitives could go to access justice (Josh. 20:1-9; see also Num. 35:9-34; Deut. 19:1-13).

Remember that the Levites did not receive an inheritance of land. Instead, the Levites were given cities throughout the region to live in and pasture their livestock (21:1-42). A summary paragraph in Joshua 21:43-45 mentioned above is a testimony to God's faithfulness.



## **Obedience** (Josh. 14:1-5)

The Lord had previously given Moses instructions on how the promised land would be allotted among the Israelite tribes (Num. 34). Following Moses's directives, Joshua, Eleazar the priest, and the selected leaders from each tribe divided the promised land. Each tribe was given its inheritance of land according to God's plan.

### **VERSE 1**

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**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.**

The narrative of the land allotment to the western tribes occurs in Joshua 14:1-19:51. The two faithful scouts, Caleb and Joshua, receiving their inheritances serve as bookends to the distribution of the land to the tribes of Israel (14:6-15; 19:49-50). They were the only two spies who had believed God would give the land of Canaan to Israel (Num. 14:6-10,24). Forms of the Hebrew term translated as **portions** appear in both Joshua 14:1 and 19:51. The Hebrew root word for *portion* is the same root as the word for "inheritance" (14:2). The key concept behind *portions*

or inheritance is the idea of ownership. God alone owns the land, so He gave it to His people.

**Eleazar** was the third son of Aaron, Israel's high priest (Ex. 6:23; Num. 20:28). Moses commissioned Joshua in his presence (27:22-23). Numbers 34:16-29 explains that Joshua, Eleazar, and one representative from each tribe were to distribute the land. Eleazar's name recurs in the theological summary of Joshua 19:51. The allocation of the land was done in the Lord's presence at Shiloh at the entrance to the tent of meeting (Josh. 18:8-10; 19:51).

The Bible first mentions the **land of Canaan** in Genesis 11:31. Geographically, Genesis 13:12 contrasts the land of Canaan's hill country with the fertile valley around the Dead Sea where Lot lived near Sodom. The expression *land of Canaan* is used more than thirty times throughout the narratives about Israel's ancestors in Genesis. Psalm 105:11 attests to God's covenant with the patriarchs and Israel: "I will give the land of Canaan to you as your inherited portion."

### VERSES 2-3

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**Their inheritance was by lot as the LORD commanded through Moses for the nine and a half tribes, 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.**

**Inheritance** refers to "property," "heritage," or "possession." The Hebrew term appears almost fifty times in Joshua. The casting of lots was a practice instituted by God (Ex. 28:30). Priests would use this practice to consult with God on specific matters (Num. 27:21). God's charge that the land be divided **by lot** is detailed in Numbers 26:52-65. God, not the process itself, would reveal which portions of the land went to each tribe.

Moses gave the land to **the two and a half tribes** on the eastern side of **the Jordan River**, but the land within Canaan was allotted by Joshua and Eleazar. The section in Joshua dealing with land allotments is bracketed at the beginning (Josh. 14:3-4) and the end of Joshua (21:1-42) by information concerning **the Levites**. The Levites received **no inheritance**, but they did receive their own cities located throughout Israel (chap. 21) so they could tend their flocks and raise crops (Num. 18:20; 35:1-8).

In the wilderness, the tribe of Levi stood with Moses when the rest of the people disobeyed God by making the golden calf (Ex. 32:25-29). Therefore, Moses gave this tribe the responsibility for assisting with the

sacrifices and caring for the tabernacle—setting it up, taking it down, and transporting the tabernacle as the Israelites moved from place to place, as well as caring for the holy instruments used in the tabernacle (Num. 3:5-37; 18:20-24). In many ways, the Levites were dependent on the generosity of the rest of God’s people.

#### VERSE 4

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**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.**

**Joseph** was one of the twelve sons of Jacob, but there was no tribe named after him. Instead, there were two tribes named after his two sons, **Manasseh** and **Ephraim** (Gen. 46:20). That would make thirteen tribal allotments, but since the tribe of Levi did not have their own land allotment, the number of tribes stood at twelve. Later in the Bible, sometimes the name *Joseph* was used as a designation for the entire northern kingdom called Israel (Ps. 78:67; Ezek. 37:16,19; Amos 5:6; Obad. 1:18).

#### VERSE 5

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**So the Israelites did as the LORD commanded Moses, and they divided the land.**

One of the terms used to describe the process of land allocation is **divided**. Throughout the second half of Joshua the Hebrew term is translated as some form of “divide” (13:7; 14:5; 18:2,5; 19:51), “distributed” (18:10), and “share” (22:8). This short summary once again reverts back to Moses, who originally detailed Israel’s inheritance in the book of Numbers (Num. 26:52-56).

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### **Explore Further**

Read the article “Inheritance” on pages 799–800 in the *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Revised and Expanded*. Note how in this legal transmission of property after death the eldest son often received a double portion. How do the New Testament and the Psalms broaden the understanding of inheritance?

## Devotion (Josh. 14:6-9)

Devotion is a characteristic of Caleb himself. For Caleb, devotion to the Lord was not a sense of entitlement or arrogance. Devotion can be defined as loyalty or enthusiasm for a person, an activity, or a cause. We speak of devotion to duty, living a life of devotion, or even having daily devotions.

### VERSE 6

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**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.”**

**Caleb** was a remarkable man among the Israelites. He was one of the twelve spies sent out by Moses to explore the promised land of Canaan. When they returned, only Caleb and Joshua among the spies gave a good report concerning the land and encouraged the Israelites to move forward with faith in God that through Him they could conquer the land (Num. 13-14). Because of their faith in God, Caleb and Joshua were the only members of that generation of Israelites who were allowed to enter the promised land (14:20-24).

Caleb and **the descendants of Judah** approached Joshua at Gilgal. Judah was the fourth son of Jacob, whose mother was Leah (Gen. 29:35). In the next chapter, it was Judah who received their tribal allotment first (Josh. 15:1-12). His tribe would occupy the important territory west of the Dead Sea. In the New Testament, Jesus came from the tribe of Judah (Matt. 1:2-3).

Some of the tribal allotments were allocated at Shiloh (Josh. 18:1). But here, the tribe of Judah met Joshua at **Gilgal**. *Gilgal* was the place where Israel first erected a monument to the Lord after crossing the Jordan River (4:19-20). Gilgal was also the home base for Israel’s sorties into the land of Canaan. In addition to Gilgal and Shiloh, Shechem was a third sacred site in the book of Joshua. The book closes with Israel’s renewal of the covenant at Shechem (Josh. 24).

There are three separate accounts of Caleb’s land allotment (14:6-15; 15:13-19; Judg. 1:12-15). Caleb’s speech here is central to the book of Joshua. This is another example of how narrative is carried along by means of direct discourse. Caleb addressed Joshua directly, **“You know what the LORD promised Moses the man of God at Kadesh-barnea about you and me.”** Both Joshua and Caleb were present when

Moses made the promise of land. *Kadesh-barnea* was from where Moses originally sent the spies while the first generation of Israel was in the wilderness south of Canaan (Deut. 1:19,22-23).

#### VERSE 7

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**“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.”**

Time flew. Caleb was now eighty-five years old. Forty-five years is a long time to wait in faith for God’s promise to come to completion. Caleb recalled when Moses sent him out with others to scout out the land. He was **forty years old** at the time. When the twelve scouts returned, only Joshua and Caleb brought back **an honest report**. Caleb spoke of his faith in God from his heart that Israel could conquer the promised land because God had promised it. The Hebrew literally says that Caleb gave “a word which was in my heart” or “a word as in my heart.”

#### VERSE 8

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**“My brothers who went with me caused the people to lose heart, but I followed the LORD my God completely.”**

Caleb contrasted his own actions with those of his **brothers**, the other ten scouts. Their fearfulness caused the people **to lose heart**. Instead, Caleb professed, **“I followed the LORD my God completely.”** This is particularly emphatic in Hebrew. It was no vain boast. This expression is used three times in this passage with slight variation (vv. 8,9,14). The Hebrew term for **completely** means to fill to the top, to be full, and even replenish.

#### VERSE 9

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**“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.’”**

Caleb remembered Moses’s oath that he swore, **“The land where you have set foot will be an inheritance for you and your descendants forever.”** This promise was not only for Caleb, but for his *descendants*. The Hebrew term for *forever* is used when God promised King David that He would establish an eternal kingdom through one of David’s

own descendants, and that descendant would rule on his throne forever (2 Sam. 7:12-16). In the New Testament, Jesus is a priest forever (Heb. 5:6). Instead of a land inheritance, for Christians there remains a promise of an eternal inheritance (9:15).

This was all intensely personal for Caleb, **“Moses swore to me.”** Caleb had **followed the LORD** completely. God Himself said this very thing about Caleb when Caleb was young, “My servant Caleb has a different spirit and has remained loyal to me” (Num 14:24). Caleb created the spiritual space for a legacy to grow. Basically, he simply kept the first of the Ten Commandments. We create the same spiritual space by wholly giving our wills over to the God.



### Explore Further

Read the article “Spies in the Land” on pages 204–205 in the *Holy Land Illustrated Bible*. What was it that intimidated the spies so? Why do you think Caleb and Joshua had the faith to see that God could be relied on to keep His promise to His people?

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## Inheritance (Josh. 14:10-15)

Caleb, now eighty-five years old, was confident that he could defeat any current inhabitants of the land with God’s help. Joshua blessed Caleb and gave him Hebron as his inheritance.

### VERSE 10

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**“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.”**

The personal nature of Caleb’s profession continued. This entire section highlights Caleb’s assurance of the promises of God. God’s promise is specifically mentioned three times in verses 10 through 12. This eighty-five-year-old man accounted for his many years because God **promised** that he would live until he received his inheritance (Num. 14:24,30). **“The LORD has kept me alive.”** By the time Caleb

received his inheritance many decades later, he was one of the very few adults still alive who knew Moses personally. So he drew on the Lord's personal promise to him that he and his descendants would be given an inheritance from the land. Ironically, not even Moses was kept alive to receive this promise.

#### VERSE 11

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**“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.”**

Caleb's words sprang from a position of faith based on decades of experience. Since God promised, Caleb knew he would have the **strength** for two things: **battle** and **daily tasks**. The expression *daily tasks* literally reads, “going out and coming in.” It is a common euphemism for the activities of daily living. Caleb's strength was the same as when he had scouted the promised land over four decades earlier.

#### VERSE 12

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**“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.”**

Caleb wanted the **hill country** that the Lord originally promised him. He wanted the fight. This was an act of faith. The name **Anakim** means “strongnecked.” *Anakim* is the plural form of the name “Anak.” The descendants of Anak lived in the hill country around Hebron (Num. 13:22). The destruction of the Anakim is recounted in Joshua 11:21-22. But some must have still remained in Hebron and the surrounding regions, even though the major power centers of the land had been taken. Caleb's eyes were wide open to the presence of enemies and their fortified cities.

When Caleb said, **“Perhaps the LORD will be with me,”** this was not a lack of faith nor false humility. It sprang from a genuine humility that knew the battle would ultimately be the Lord's. Caleb's humble confidence was based on his previous experience.

#### VERSES 13-14

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**Then Joshua blessed Caleb son of Jephunneh and gave him**

**Hebron as an inheritance. 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.**

This is one of the rare times when Joshua **blessed** someone. In the Bible, a blessing is not just wishing someone well, but it is a bestowal of vitality and power via the spoken word. Joshua placed his full authority in support of Caleb's task ahead.

**Hebron** was about nineteen miles south of Jerusalem and fifteen miles west of the Dead Sea. It was and is one of the highest points in the hill country. Hebron was a very ancient city. Numbers 13:22 says that Hebron was founded seven years before Zoan, which would have been around 1725 BC. Hebron was blessed with a prolific spring and plenty of fertile soil. It was a lively center of grape and olive oil production. At the time the book of Joshua was written Hebron still belonged to Caleb and his descendants (Josh. 14:14). Again, we see this expression of following the Lord **completely** (see above in vv. 8-9; see Num. 14:24).

#### VERSE 15

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**Hebron's name used to be Kiriath-arba; Arba was the greatest man among the Anakim. After this, the land had rest from war.**

**Hebron** and **Kiriath-arba** are the same city (see Gen. 23:2; Josh. 20:7). **Rest from war** refers to the cessation of hostilities (Josh. 11:23).

The concrete and tangible land inheritance of Canaan foreshadows the Christian's inheritance, which is not a legacy based on acquisition of land. Galatians 3:27-4:7 describes that inheritance. If we belong to Christ, we are heirs according to the promise. We are no longer slaves to the law, but because the Holy Spirit has been sent into our hearts, God has made us heirs and co-heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:16-17). The Bible closes with the promise, "The one who conquers will inherit these things, and I will be his God, and he will be my son" (Rev. 21:7).

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### **Explore Further**

Read the article entitled, "Hebron" on pages 208-209 in the *Holy Land Illustrated Bible* and "Hebron" on pages 729-730 in the *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Revised and Expanded*. What roles did Hebron play throughout Old Testament times?