

God's First Sovereign Distribution: Judah

Joshua 15:1-12

Preached by Phillip Kayser at DCC on Sunday, January 14th 2024

I. Introduction

Even if you aren't super-interested in Judah's land boundaries, there are things in this passage that directly relate to each one of us - and I hope you will see that. Before we dig into this passage, I want to briefly review two lessons we have already briefly learned that tie in and help to explain this passage.

A. Our God is a promise-keeping God

The first one is that our God is a promise-keeping God. Granted, the promise had been given long before, but even back when God gave that promise to Abraham, He told Abraham that it would be more than four hundred years before the promise would be fulfilled. And it *was* fulfilled in exactly the way, and in exactly the time that God had promised it would be. God is always on time for each of us. He is a promise-keeping God.

B. God has a longterm perspective

Second, though God also had short-term promises that He *immediately* blessed Abraham with, this long-term promise helped Abraham to develop a long-term perspective. And that was so important for the development of Abraham's faith. Well, in the same way, God blesses us daily by fulfilling His promises to care for us. But He has also made *long-range* promises that we don't immediately see fulfilled in our lifetime, and those promises test our faith just as it tested Abraham's faith. I believe that the things that you and I are doing in our lifetime are a part of God's plan for moving planet earth towards its glorious future - a future of a completely converted world that understands God's Word and applies it to all of life. It's going to happen. And our efforts are a part of making that happen - if we do them in faith. Isaiah 11:9 says that "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea." It takes faith to believe that Postmillennial hope, and when you have faith to believe *those* kinds of future impossibilities - like every nation being converted, and every ruler following the blueprints of the Bible for governing the nations, it will give you faith to plant seeds now - just like Abraham did. Abraham planted all kinds of seeds for this future hope. This is what motivates me to write a book on Biblical civics. Some people wonder why I would do that since no nation follows God's blueprints right now. But I do so for two reasons. First, to stand as a rebuke to civil officers. And second, at some point those principles *will* be applied, so they need to be spelled out now. But let's dive into the text and look at a few more lessons.

II. God's sovereignty over the lot (v. 1a)

Verse 1 begins by saying, "So this was the lot of the tribe of the children of Judah..." Lots were like dice that were thrown in games. Lots and dice are often equated with chance by the world. But Proverbs 16:33 says that "The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD." In other words, it is saying that even what some people consider to be random chance is completely controlled by the Lord. Matthew 10:29 says that not one sparrow falls to the ground apart from the will of the Lord, and the next verse says that at any given moment, every hair of your head is numbered. You don't lose a single hair without it being a part of God's will. You cannot breathe in a dust particle without God having ordained it to be. As the Westminster Confession words it, "God from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely, and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass."

So the question comes up, does that mean we need to use lots or dice every time we are seeking God's will? That's the conclusion that some people come to, and Reformed people would say, "Uh uh uh. Not so fast. Normally we should *not* use dice to seek God's will." And they say "normally" because there *are* unique situations where this *would* be appropriate. *This* was a unique situation where God commanded them to use the lot in Numbers 26:55-65. And there was a good reason. God knew that there were going to be arguments among the tribes if a human made the decision of who got which land, but if it was left up to the lot, there could be no argument. And there are similar situations that come up today where it is appropriate to flip a coin to make a decision. When people cannot come to agreement, but they do desire to please the Lord, and either decision is an ethically appropriate decision, or even three or four decisions are potentially ethically permissible decisions, letting a coin or a dice-throw settle the question can *sometimes* be helpful. Proverbs 18:18 says, "Casting lots causes contentions to cease, and keeps the mighty apart."

But let me just give this caution - wherever the general principles of the Word *can* settle an issue, we should stick to that and make a decision based on the Word of God. I know that takes hard work, but that's what God *normally* expects. And if we are lazy, we are not even going to know if the Word of God applies. This is one of the reasons I try to train the men I mentor to learn how to extra applications from verses. This past Monday someone asked if it was OK to adopt embryos (sometimes called snowflake babies because the embryos are frozen). And a lot of people said, "Yeah, it's just like adoption. The Bible really doesn't speak to this very much." So they didn't think there were any ethical decisions to be made. But while such an adoption may be a good thing in certain circumstances, I pointed out that there were five ethical things that really needed to be considered in this decision [See end of sermon if you are curious]. It should not be an impulse decision. God's Word addresses so much. And as I mentioned to them, I have not even studied this issue as much as could be studied. The Bible probably does say a lot more to that issue. But the point is that we need to dig into the Scriptures a lot more than we tend to do when making decisions before resorting to dice or flipping a coin.

But the main point I am making here is that we need to have confidence that God is sovereign over everything - including so-called chance events. As Gary said last week in his

sermon on thanksgiving, thanking God for all things assumes that God is sovereign over all things - including the difficult things that you face. So the lot speaks to God's sovereignty.

III. Borders are useful for tribes/states and clans/counties (vv. 1cff)

But let's look next at the borders. And I am going to spend most of my time on this point because it is almost never talked about, and yet is so relevant to what is going on in America today.

A. Background on the phrase "Judah according to their *mishpacha*" (vv. 1,12)

It is very clear in these and subsequent chapters that the borders were all laid out with three civil entities in view - Israel as a whole, the tribes, and the entity that the New King James mistranslates as "families" - at least in *my* opinion it is a mistranslation. The Hebrew word is *mishpacha*, and you don't have to read the literature very far to realize that there is huge debate on how that should be translated. "Clan" might be a bit more of an accurate translation, especially if you think of the *Scottish* clans, like the MacGregors, MacDonalds, and Macleods, where you could identify with the clan even if you couldn't trace your lineage.¹ But however you translate the term, it is clear that each *mishpacha* had its own army, it's own court system, and all of the other civil functions.² It wasn't just a family (as we think of families). In fact, there are places in the Bible where members from outside the clan (like Caleb's family) could be considered to be members of a *mishpacha*, even though they had no kinship with each other.³ That by itself rules out the translation of "families."

¹ Clines says, "A שבט tribe consisted of many clans (משפחה) made up of several extended families or phratries (בית אב)."
David J. A. Clines, ed., *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press; Sheffield Phoenix Press, 1993–2011), 231. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 135–136. Durham says, "משפחה designates a technical subdivision of a tribe into the clans that make it up, theoretically by family branches." John I. Durham, *Exodus, vol. 3, Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1987), 80.

² "The suggested translations 'protective association of families' and 'subtribal unit' are unwieldy although they convey the dimension of local cooperation involved in military protection." R. Reed Lessing, *Amos, Concordia Commentary* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009), 202. See quotes in footnotes below for other civil functions.

³ One example is in Judges 17:7 where a Levite is said to be "of a *mishpacha* in Judah." He had no tribal kinship, yet he was said to belong to one of the *mishpachas* of Judah. Thus, Lessing says that even though ordinarily "The closest English equivalent of משפחה is the originally Gaelic term 'clan,' ... The noun משפחה is often used in quite unspecific ways for large social groups... [and] does not fit the general anthropological understanding of a

And that is why many scholars point out that a *mishpacha*, though it could *often* represent one clan, was technically more than simply a clan. It was a *legal subdivision of a tribe*. Every word there counts - it was a legal subdivision of a tribe that had its own army,⁴ and had other civil functions.⁵ In many ways, it was similar in its functions to our modern counties. Thus, several authors point out that Israel was a confederation of tribes (or states), and each state was a confederation of counties, with checks and balances of power built into each entity.⁶

And nations, tribes, and counties all had borders that *limited* their jurisdiction. *That was the whole point of their borders*. They didn't own land like individuals did. The borders *limited* their jurisdiction. And this is so important to understand if we are to oppose some of the federal and state tyranny we have been seeing in the last few decades. And because of the mistranslation here, I need to dig into this a bit more to prove my point.

clan..." R. Reed Lessing, *Amos*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009), 202.

⁴ Judges 18:11 is one example: "six hundred men of a *mishpacha* of the Danites went from there, from Zorah and Eshtaol, armed with weapons of war." Hillers speaks of "the troops raised from each tribal subdivision (משפחה) for military purposes." Delbert R. Hillers, *Micah: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Micah*, ed. Paul D. Hanson and Loren R. Fisher, *Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 65–66. See quotes in footnote 9 below.

⁵ See footnote 3. Even those who see it as usually referring to a clan often acknowledge that "clan" is an inadequate translation. For example, Chirichigno acknowledges that "The term משפחה has traditionally been understood to refer to the clan (or proper lineage) which is thought to occupy the middle position of the social hierarchy of Israel. However, Rogerson, Mendenhall, and Lemche have observed that the term משפחה can refer to other social units than 'clan' ..." Gregory C. Chirichigno, *Debt-Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, vol. 141, *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 135–136. Mounce says, "mišpāḥâ has a wider range of meaning than the English word "family" usually implies." William D. Mounce, *Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 112.

⁶ There are many examples of this. Bennet says that "The tribe was a confederation of mishpāḥās ...The names of some of the mishpāḥās (Hebronites, Nu 3:27; Hezronites, Nu 26:6; Shechemites, Nu 26:31) show that in many cases the mishpāḥā came to mean the inhabitants of a town or district... Gideon's force consisted of the fighting men of the mishpāḥā Abiezer, who amounted in number to three hundred." William Henry Bennett, "TRIBE," in *A Dictionary of the Bible: Dealing with Its Language, Literature, and Contents Including the Biblical Theology*, ed. James Hastings et al. (New York; Edinburgh: Charles Scribner's Sons; T. & T. Clark, 1911–1912), 811–813.

Notice that verse 1 says, "So this was the lot of the tribe of the children of Judah according to their *mishpacha*." And verse 12 ends this section by saying, "This is the boundary of the children of Judah all around *according to their mishpacha*." The nation of Israel had a border, each tribe had a border (except for Levi), and each *mishpacha* had its own border.

Those borders were very useful for the tribes, which is the equivalent of our states, and they were useful to the *mishpacha*, which is equivalent to our counties. It's not just our *national* borders that are important - so are the borders of each state and each county. Those borders speak of *jurisdictions*. Without permission, a sheriff does not have the authority to operate in another county - nor does the avenger of blood in the Bible. Nor does the Nebraska legislature have the authority to dictate things for Iowa. And those of you from Iowa are praising God for that. Nor was Israel to interfere with Edom or with Moab, the way the San Francisco city council was trying to do with Israel recently.

Well, throughout this passage God lays down the exact locations of each border of Judah according to its *mishpacha* and the borders of neighboring nations. Verse 1 goes on to say, "The border of Edom at the Wilderness of Zin southward was the extreme southern boundary." And the word "border" occurs in every verse in our section except for verse 3, where the word "it" *also* refers to the border.

Now, here is where it is significant in comparing to America. The Hebrew word for border, (*Gibulah* - גִּבּוּלָה), when it is used for a corporate entity like Edom, Moab, Judah, Simeon, etc., is defined by the dictionary as "the geographical area under the jurisdiction of a sovereign state: Nu 32:33; Jos 19:49... the general area where the territory of two or more nations or people groups meet: Dt 32:8."⁷ So let's see if there are state-like functions for both tribes and *mishpacha*.

There are many passages that indicate that each of the eleven tribes that were given borders had their own armies, generals, governors, court system, etc., and in many ways acted as a sovereign state. Thus, numerous authors demonstrate that Israel was a confederation of states - much like America is *supposed* to be.⁸ Likewise, the Hastings

⁷ The Lexham Analytical Lexicon of the Hebrew Bible (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2017).

⁸ For example, Harrington says, "Israel was a confederation of twelve tribes united in Covenant with Yahweh." Wilfrid J. Harrington, *Record of Revelation, vol. I, Key to the Bible* (New York: Alba House, 1975), 70. Hyun says, "As a confederation of 12 tribes, the Israelites needed an authoritative or legitimate voice to provide law for judgment and guidance. As the law-giver, judge, and guide, God commanded Moses to build the tabernacle to meet and communicate with His people." Timothy Hyun, "Tabernacle," in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016). Gunneweg says, "The OT states that in its earliest period, Israel was a confederation of 12 tribes (Judges 5)." Antonius H. J. Gunneweg, Marianne Awerbuch, and Charles A. Kimball, "Israel," in *The Encyclopedia of Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI; Leiden, Netherlands: Wm. B. Eerdmans; Brill, 1999–2003), 768. See Elmer L. Towns, *Fasting for Spiritual Breakthrough* (Ventura, CA: Regal; Gospel Light, 1996), 66.

Dictionary of the Bible demonstrates that there were subdivisions within Israel called *Mishpachas* that had many of the functions of America's early county-structures, and that those *Mishpachas* could quickly mount a fighting force under a leader equivalent to our sheriff.⁹ Judges 18:11 is one example. It says that "six hundred men of a *mishpacha* of the Danites went from there, from Zorah and Eshtaol, armed with weapons of war." Hillers speaks of "the troops raised from each ... (מִשְׁפָּחָה) for military purposes." So each *mishpacha* can raise its own military force under its own leaders, and is not just dissolved into the national army. The county militia maintains its status even within a larger army. Even our modern military needs to be completely revamped and decentralized like it was in early America.

Another fact that helps to give definition to the *mishpachas* is that they had the authority to investigate a case of murder, judge it, and inflict the death penalty for that murder even during the time of the monarchy (2 Sam. 14:7; cf. also Numb. 35:19; Deut. 19:12). This was not just during the time of Joshua or the judges; it was true even during the time of the monarchy. Now, in 2 Samuel 14:7 (which was during the latter part of the reign of David), the New King James Version mistranslates *mischpacha* once again as the *family* trying to execute the murderer, but families did not have that authority; *mishpachas* did. They were the smallest governmental unit with civil powers of that sort.

So however you translate the Hebrew word, see the word that is translated here as "families" as being the smallest governmental unit with *full* civil powers. *That's the key point.* That's why Jeremiah 1:5 speaks of every *mishpacha* as having a throne (a *cisay* - אִסַּי), which is a civil function. And these *Mishpachas* had their borders and their jurisdictions that were honored. The book of Judges especially shows some the interactions between counties and tribe, and between tribe and tribe that shows at least four principles. And I will be ending this particular point by making four applications.

B. Four applications

First, God intended decentralization and distribution of civil powers. America has gone in the exact opposite direction; it has become more and more centralized, and states and counties have more and more relinquished their powers to the federal government. That needs to be reversed. At the Abolitionist meeting, which has now been postponed to later,

⁹ VanGemeran says, "Gottwald (The Tribes of Yahweh, 1979, 270) suggests that the מִשְׁפָּחָה is a "הַמִּשְׁפָּחָה in arms" (cf. the interchange of terms in 1 Sam 10:19–21)." Willem VanGemeran, ed., *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997), 416. Bennet says that "The tribe was a confederation of mishpāhās [such as] ...Hebronites, Nu 3:27; Hezronites, Nu 26:6; Shechemites, Nu 26:31...Gideon's force consisted of the fighting men of the mishpāhā Abiezer, who amounted in number to three hundred." William Henry Bennett, "TRIBE," in *A Dictionary of the Bible: Dealing with Its Language, Literature, and Contents Including the Biblical Theology*, ed. James Hastings et al. (New York; Edinburgh: Charles Scribner's Sons; T. & T. Clark, 1911–1912), 811–813. See footnote 4.

Jarrold was going to share how Butler County is trying to reverse this pattern of centralization and be a model to other counties. That's a good thing. We need to encourage our counties and states to take back what was originally intended to be in their jurisdiction and to give up powers that *shouldn't* belong to any of the jurisdictions. We need to think about these things and not just assume that what happens has always happened. Early America was much closer to the Biblical ideal than most people realize, and R. J. Rushdoony has written some great stuff on that.

Second, the *mishpacha*/county in the Bible could interpose itself against its own tribe, or even against a neighboring county or a neighboring tribe if those governmental units sought to invade or intrude themselves beyond their jurisdictions. That invasion of jurisdiction *could* be resisted - and *should* be resisted. Later in the Bible, these very borders will be the justification for interposition. In America, the South had every right to secede to avoid the tyranny that Abraham Lincoln had been engaging in. Now, the South had its *own* tyrannical issues, but secession and other forms of interposition are perfectly Biblical. This is not the passage we will use to get into those forms of interposition (or why some are better than others), but the borders and the relationships within those borders speaks to limited jurisdictions that need to be carefully guarded. And as we influence politicians, we need to be thinking about these things. America's founding fathers certainly did.

Third, interposition can go both directions because tyranny can arise in *any* civil jurisdiction. Just one example of tyranny in a lower court: In 2 Samuel 14:7, a woman appeals to King David to interpose downward against an unjust sentence that her *mishpacha* had rendered against the sole surviving member of her family, who had accidentally killed his brother. It was a fake set-up by Joab, but hey, in theory it illustrates the principle well. David promised to investigate and intervene. He knew that *mishpachas* could potentially engage in injustice, and it is helpful to be able to appeal to a higher jurisdiction. It was a wonderful thing when the Supreme Court of the United States overthrew *Roe v Wade* in a 6-3 decision. That appeal to the Supreme Court was a wonderful appeal. That enabled state opposition to abortion to begin to roll faster. So interposition can go in all directions when jurisdictions are overstepped.

Fourth, this is one of hundreds of passages that helps to define free travel, immigration, and citizenship. Earlier in the book we saw that Israel had plenty of strangers who were in their midst and who were permanent residents who were enjoying the liberties of Israel, but who were not Jews and not citizens. When you study all the border passages of the Bible you discover that individuals and families (like Elimelech, Naomi, Ruth, and others) were allowed to travel freely over county borders, over state borders, and over national borders. But just because they entered a nation didn't mean they were citizens of that nation. The same was true of tribes and of the *mishpacha*. Strangers could live in all three civil jurisdictions, but in order to have a *vote* and in order to own land they had to embrace the faith, get circumcised, and become Jews. There was a commitment to a Biblical worldview required. And we have seen that Gentiles *could* become Jews. Caleb was formerly a Gentile. But anyway, there was free travel, but citizenship had its restrictions, and even those who traveled in the country had to be willing to abide by its laws.

And you see that God prophesies that this is the way it will be when the whole world is converted. In the future converted world, anyone will be able to live in the land. In the Old Testament, anyone *was* able to live in the land - even unbelievers, *if they are willing to submit to God's laws*. But to vote or to own land requires something more. And my book on Biblical civics will get into that. But the Bible gave none of the language and ethnic restrictions that Christian Nationalists insist upon. For example, turn with me to Isaiah 19 and I will read you one of the prophecies that describes a time still in our future. Isaiah 19, and beginning to read in verse 18. This is a great passage to oppose Wolfe's racist Christian nationalism, or others who want to put high walls around our nation - which by the way, don't just keep people out; they can imprison citizens too. Let's start reading in verse 18.

Is. 19:18 In that day five cities in the land of Egypt will speak the language of Canaan and swear by the LORD of hosts; one will be called the City of Destruction.

Notice that these Egyptian cities will speak Hebrew and be Christian. Speaking a non-Egyptian language does not mean they cease to be an Egyptian nation. Breaking down language barriers is not an unbiblical thing. But at this stage in history, it is not completely converted; it's a five to one ratio. Verse 19.

Is. 19:19 In that day there will be an altar to the LORD in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the LORD at its border. 20 And it will be for a sign and for a witness to the LORD of hosts in the land of Egypt; for they will cry to the LORD because of the oppressors, and He will send them a Savior and a Mighty One, and He will deliver them. 21 Then the LORD will be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians will know the LORD in that day, and will make sacrifice and offering; yes, they will make a vow to the LORD and perform it. 22 And the LORD will strike Egypt, He will strike and heal it; they will return to the LORD, and He will be entreated by them and heal them. [Now get this -] Is. 19:23 In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian will come into Egypt and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians will serve with the Assyrians. Is. 19:24 In that day Israel will be one of three with Egypt and Assyria—a blessing in the midst of the land, 25 whom the LORD of hosts shall bless, saying, "Blessed is Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel My inheritance."

So there will be three Christian nations in the Middle East - Egypt, Assyria, and Israel. They will all speak the same language, while maintaining their borders. But there will be a highway between them and free travel despite those borders. In other words, the borders limited each nation's political *jurisdiction*, but it was not designed to keep people out as Christian nationalists do. Even though Egyptians will be in Assyria and Israel, and vice versa, that will not destroy their national identities. Why? Because God insisted on a much higher standard for citizenship. I won't get into other ways in which this overthrows Wolfe's Christian nationalism, but I think Martin Selbrede does a nice job of that.¹⁰ OK, enough on that point. But let me make some general observations on this passage without getting into all the specifics of towns, villages, rivers, and seas.

¹⁰ <https://chalcedon.edu/resources/articles/a-stone-cut-without-hands>

IV. Judah would have rejoiced in the detailed specs (just as a new owner of a house would)

First, I would encourage you when reading Scriptures like this, to try to get into the thinking of the original audience. If you don't, these passages *will* bore you to tears. Let me use an analogy. When one of you purchases a house, you are super interested in the page after page of specifications of that property - the kind of insulation, the age of the roof, what kind of roof it is, the shape of the plumbing, and other details. You *want* to know every detail because you are buying it. And because we love you, *we* are interested in those details too and rejoice with you. It was such a delight for Gary and me to be able to dedicate Lyle and Grace's new home, and listen to some of the specifications. They were such a blessing. And we have been thrilled at other recent purchases of houses that some of our members have made.

Well, in the same way, the tribe of Judah considered this text a precious text since it spelled out their inheritance, jurisdiction, and authority. And once you understand *why* they would have rejoiced in the text, you can begin to apply these texts to modern situations - like we have been doing.¹¹

I won't get into why the mention of each town helps to interpret later passages because it would be too tedious, but just know that every word of every passage in the Bible was intended for our edification and is needed for some purpose. Don't skip over passages like this. Ask questions about the original audience, and the Lord might open up further applications for you.

V. God gave Judah the first allotment

Another thing that I notice in this text is that Judah got its allotment *first* even though Judah was the *fourth* son of Jacob, born to Leah, not Rachel (Gen. 29:32–35). Other tribes might have wondered why on earth God would do this. Judah was not the firstborn. Well, if they knew their Bible, they might have guessed. In Genesis 49, Jacob blessed each of his sons, and Judah received a *special* blessing, stating that he would rule over his brothers, and that the Messianic King would come from him (Gen. 49:8–12). Making Judah receive his portion by lot first may be a hint of that.

VI. God gave Judah the biggest and best portion

Likewise, giving Judah the biggest and best portion of the land may also be a hint that there was something special that was going to happen in Judah. David Dickman says,

¹¹ Currid makes this point in John D. Currid, *Strong and Courageous: Joshua Simply Explained, Welwyn Commentary Series* (Darlington, England; Carlisle, PA: EP Books, 2011), 181.

Commentators from Calvin onward have indicated that Judah comes first in the order primarily because of the special blessings conferred on it by Jacob (Genesis 49:8–12). As the Old Testament story develops, Judah assumes increasing importance among the twelve, not least because King David and his descendants come from Judah, as does great David's greater son, the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:1). After the division of the kingdom, it is Judah by which the southern kingdom is known, with its capital in Jerusalem and the Lord's temple there, so that in every way this tribe has the supremacy among the brothers. In 15:1–12 its boundaries are carefully and clearly set out with regard to all four points of the compass.¹²

But let's apply this a little bit further than he does. When you actually see how nice a slice of the pie Judah gets, *it may not seem fair*. But this is actually a perfect picture of how God sovereignly distributes His gifts to His elect all down through history. *He never distributes His gifts equally - never*. And that should not bother us. None of us deserve anything, and rather than envying what other people have, we should rejoice in what God has given to them. God is Lord and He has the right to give uneven distribution of gifts, finances, and talents. And your heart is evil if you have envy. You need to repent of that. That envy will spoil you and make you ineffective in God's kingdom.

Interestingly, in Matthew 18, Jesus applies this to even how many times we must forgive our brother. Some people are easy to deal with and others are not so easy. Peter said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven." And it may not seem fair that one person only needs to be forgiven a few times, and another one must be forgiven 70 times 7, which is 490 times. And yet we have to forgive and love both?!? What's with that? But all of us should rejoice that God has given us *any* grace and *any* finances and *any* mercies. He is the Lord, and He has the right to distribute as He wills.

VII. The borders of Judah

OK. Let me at least outline the borders. I won't spell out the borders in great detail. If I were addressing scholars, I might have spent more time on it. It does have archaeological, cartographic, and other significance. But let me just summarize it briefly. Verses 2-4 give the southern border, verses 3-4 the western, the first part of verse 5 gives the eastern border, and verses 5-11 give the northern border. So the passage goes from south, to west, to east, and then north. So it's the Sea of Galilee up north with the Jordan river being a dividing line, and the western edge being the Mediterranean. And just as God expected the other tribes to rejoice in God's distributions, God expects us to rejoice in what each person in our church and other churches have. Envy should be banished from every heart. God has His purposes in His distributions, and we can trust Him. May it be so. Amen.

¹² David Jackman, *Joshua: People of God's Purpose*, ed. R. Kent Hughes, *Preaching the Word* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 154.

For those curious about my views on the adoption of snowflake babies, here is what I said,

I won't deal with the justification of such an adoption and let others weigh in on that, but assuming that there is a justification for the insertion of the baby into the womb, here are several things that such a couple should be aware of. 1. First, science has shown that fetal cells cross the placenta and enter the mother's bloodstream. These pluripotent cells do all kinds of things to the mother's organs, including her brain. This microchimerism can also pass the cells of a previous baby on to the next baby in the womb. Though it doesn't rule out adoption of a snowflake baby (blood transfusions can do this too), one should at least be aware of the physical things that will be at play in such an adoption. It is more than a normal adoption. 2. Second, if an adoption happens, it is critical that all curses be broken off from the adopted baby. If the Lord has not led them to do the adoption, this may not be possible. Exodus 34:7 says, "visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation." Compare Exodus 20:5-6; Numb. 14:18; Jo 21:19; Jer. 32:18; etc. If you have no idea who the parents are, you have no idea what iniquity needs to be cut off. I think it is precisely this issue of God's curses on parents that has made even normal adoptions often turn out poorly. But if God leads, I believe those curses can be broken. But it is not automatic. It must be claimed. 3. Third, often the soul of the baby is many years older than the apparent age of the body. World magazine gives the testimony of a couple who gave birth to a baby 25 years after the baby was conceived. <https://wng.org/articles/hope-for-the-unchosen-1620612369> I believe the soul is created at the instant of conception. Will this child have deep-seated bonding issues that will need to be addressed since he was in isolation for so long? I don't know, but it is my strong opinion that babies are much more cognizant of what is happening around them prior to a brain being formed, and that the brain acts as a step-down-transformer that lowers what the mind can think. This may cause unknown issues in the child that will require counseling. But whether that is the case or not, the age discrepancy between soul and body should be factored into the decision making. It will be interesting to follow this couple's progress. 4. Fourth, they should be aware that statistics show that the highest level of defrosted embryos that result in live birth is 53%, and some say less. Be prepared for an emotional roller coaster if the first implants die. Here is a testimony of a couple who tried multiple times to adopt an embryo, and was finally successful. They believe it is ethically permissible to adopt an embryo, and you can read their reasoning (as well as the reasoning of the couple in the World magazine article above). But this latter article does give some background information that is helpful to those who do adopt. <https://philipmcduffie.com/2023/02/23/embryo-adoption-an-interview-with-philip-kahlie/> 5. Fifth, we never want to downplay the ethical problems of how snowflake babies came into existence in the first place - including how the medical establishment typically harvests eggs & sperm, how they fertilize multiple eggs (often destroying the excess eggs - thus engaging in murder), destroying what appear to be abnormal embryos (but which the World magazine article above shows statistically this is not always the case), and/or allowing the

fertilized eggs to remain in limbo for a long time, etc. We should try to eliminate the way they do IV and produce multiple embryos that they either discard or freeze. It is a horrible industry, and we should not rejoice in the industry in the process of doing an adoption. The adoption should be motivated to rescue a baby from a horrific medical establishment. 6. As both articles cited above show, adoption of orphans is a wonderful thing. Our family tried on two occasions to adopt a sibling group. We believe God was guiding us all the way, and our guidance was instrumental in where they were eventually adopted. But the point is, we have a heart for adoption - but we are not naive about the dangers. I believe the dangers of adopting embryos is equal to if not greater than adoption of children whose parents we know.