

Sunday, November 17, 2013

“He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom he loved. Selah.” (Psalm 47:4)

This inheritance that God chooses for us is both temporal (that is, while we are alive on this earth) and eternal. In this life, He knows what is best for each of His sheep, and will always make a better choice than we would make if left to our own devices. We should therefore not kick or murmur against the inheritance that He has blessed us with. Our heavenly inheritance was likewise chosen by God from eternity past. It's not our choice who goes to heaven; it's His choice.

A considerable amount of time is devoted to the concept of “inheritance” in the Bible, most notably regarding the land of Canaan. The first we see of this is in Genesis 12:

“Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran. And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came. And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land. And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him. ” (Genesis 12:1-7)

Later on in chapter 15 verse 7, the Lord tells Abram that this land of Canaan is his inheritance:

“And he said unto him, I *am* the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it.” (Genesis 15:7)

In the course of time, Abraham’s descendants did take possession of that land, which is what the book of Joshua is about. The land was divided by lot, according to the instructions given by God.

“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Unto these the land shall be divided for an inheritance according to the number of names. To many thou shalt give the more inheritance, and to few thou shalt give the less inheritance: to every one shall his inheritance be given according to those that were numbered of him. Notwithstanding the land shall be divided by lot: according to the names of the tribes of their fathers they shall inherit. According to the lot shall the possession thereof be divided between many and few.” (Numbers 26:52-56)

Like all of the laws and experiences of those Old Testament Jews, this inheritance of the land of Canaan has many layers of instruction and symbolism, designed for our edification. Those Jews living under that dispensation were not all saved, and in fact, it is evident that very few of them were saved. But those who **were** saved understood the spiritual meanings of these things, and it meant more than life itself to them, as we see with our brother Naboth, who died because he did not want to give up that inheritance. This topic of “inheritance” could be the subject matter of hundreds of sermons, but I’ll go over just a few items related to it today.

“Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee. When the most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. For the LORD’S portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.” (Deuteronomy 32:7-9)

The sense of verse 8 is that when God divided the nations up, long before Abraham was even born, He reserved a parcel of land known as the land of Canaan, and made it of sufficient size to hold the children of Israel.

John Gill: *“thus the heavenly inheritance, typified by the land of Canaan, was not only promised, but prepared, provided, secured, and reserved for the spiritual Israel of God, before the foundation of the world, from all eternity, and which is appointed according to their number; there is room enough in it for them all, though they are many; in it are many mansions for the many sons to be brought to glory.”*

And verse 9 is an amazing verse. Not only has God secured an inheritance for us, but His people are said to be His inheritance!

John Gill: *“This is the reason why the Lord so early provided a portion or inheritance for the children of Israel in the land of Canaan; because they were his part, his portion, his inheritance, which he chose by lot for himself, or allotted to himself; whom he chose to be his special and peculiar people; for though all the world is his, he only reserved a part for himself, which he separated from all the rest, and considers as his portion and inheritance, see Psalm 33:12 (“Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance.”); thus the spiritual Israel of God, as they are his people, whom he has chosen, taken into covenant, given to Christ, and are redeemed and saved by him; they are his part or portion, separated by distinguishing grace from the rest of the world; and are the inheritance of Christ, who is appointed heir of all things, and is an unalienable inheritance; and is obtained by lot, or rather is measured out by a rod or line; by the line of electing grace, by which the church and people of God are circumscribed, marked out, and distinguished from others; and by the line and rule of the sacred Scriptures, which are the measure and standard of faith and practice, of worship and discipline to them.”*

Matthew Henry: *“All the world is his. He is owner and possessor of heaven and earth, but his church is his in a peculiar manner. It is his demesne, his vineyard, his garden enclosed. He has a particular delight in it: it is the beloved of his soul, in it he walks, he dwells, it is his rest for ever. He has a particular concern for it, keeps it as the apple of his eye. He has particular expectations from it, as a man has from his portion, has a much greater rent of honour, glory, and worship, from that distinguished remnant, than from all the world besides. That God should be his*

people's portion is easy to be accounted for, for he is their joy and felicity; but how they should be his portion, who neither needs them nor can be benefited by them, must be resolved into the wondrous condescensions of free grace. Even so, Father, because it seemed good in thy eyes so to call and to account them."

Every tribe in Israel got an inheritance in the land...except Levi.

"The priests the Levites, *and* all the tribe of Levi, shall have no part nor inheritance with Israel: they shall eat the offerings of the LORD made by fire, and his inheritance. Therefore shall they have no inheritance among their brethren: the LORD *is* their inheritance, as he hath said unto them."

(Deuteronomy 18:1-2)

Even as we see the children of Israel being separated from the world by God, we see another symbol within the nation of Israel itself: Levi was separated out (and even within the tribe of Levi, we have another separation with the priests being separated out). While the children of Israel in general were receiving their temporal inheritance, the Lord is said to be the inheritance of the priests and Levites. Just as God's elect are His portion, God is our portion.

John Gill: *"God, in his persons and in all his perfections, and under every character, as the God of nature, providence, and grace, is the portion of his people; and a rich, large, and satisfying portion he is, and which is inexhaustible, and will endure for ever; he is their portion in life and at death, in time and to all eternity."*

Now, there were a lot of rules surrounding the inheritance under the Mosaic dispensation. One of those rules is found in Numbers 36:

"So shall not the inheritance of the children of Israel remove from tribe to tribe: for every one of the children of Israel shall keep himself to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers. And every daughter, that possesseth an inheritance in any tribe of the children of Israel, shall be wife unto one of the family of the tribe of her father, that the children of Israel may enjoy every man the inheritance of his fathers. Neither shall the inheritance remove from *one* tribe to another tribe; but every one of the tribes of the children of Israel shall keep himself to his own inheritance." (Numbers 36:7-9)

In other words, you can't transfer these inheritances around between tribes. This would have caused utter chaos and confusion, resulting in them breaking the commandment:

“Thou shalt not remove thy neighbour’s landmark, which they of old time have set in thine inheritance, which thou shalt inherit in the land that the LORD thy God giveth thee to possess it.” (Deuteronomy 19:14)

There's a spiritual lesson here: don't try to change those bedrock doctrines that God has given us. For example, don't mess around with the absolute sovereignty of God. Don't think you can take a little of that sovereignty and give it to yourself. Don't think that by covetousness or trickery you are going to somehow obtain an inheritance that God did not choose for you, like those foolish husbandmen in the parable:

“But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.” (Matthew 21:38)

I'm going to end with a look at 1 Peter:

“Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” (1 Peter 1:3-5)

John Brown: *“When God made ancient Israel His children – brought them into a covenant relation with Him – He assigned to them an inheritance. That inheritance was, like the economy to which it belonged, material and temporal. It was the large and fertile land of Canaan, which they were to possess in security and peace, but into which they were to enter not immediately – not till after a long course of wandering in the wilderness. When God brings men into the relation of children under the new and spiritual and eternal economy, He assigns to them an inheritance which corresponds with the character of that new*

dispensation – an inheritance of which they are not to obtain the full possession, till ‘the end come – the consummation of all things.’ The inheritance here is obviously the celestial blessedness, properly so called – the final state of good men – that state which, commencing with the general resurrection, is to be continued unchanged, except by indefinite progress, forever and ever. What is figuratively termed ‘the inheritance,’ v. 4, is literally described, v. 5, as ‘the salvation ready (or, prepared) to be revealed in the last time.’”

He goes on to say that the Holy Ghost has chosen this figurative language of “inheritance” for two primary reasons:

1. *“An inheritance is something that is not obtained by the individual’s own exertions, but by the free gift or bequest of another.”*
2. *“The security of the tenure by which it is held...If the title of the claimant be but as valid as the right of the original proprietor, their tenure must be as secure as the throne of God and His Son.”*

I love you. Amen.