

Hymns:        2        Away in a Manger        24        Silent Night  
              20        Mansion Over the Hilltop        34        When We All Get to Heaven

Scripture:    Psalm 121  
Big idea:      Goin' home

Our scripture text for today is:        **Joshua 18:1 – 22:34**

### **Introduction**

For a few moments, let's travel back in time to August 1923. Frank and Elizabeth Brazier, their two daughters, and their two-year-old Scotch Collie/English Shepherd mix named Bobbie traveled across country from Silverton, Oregon to visit relatives in Wolcott, Indiana. During their visit, Bobbie was attacked by three dogs and ran away. Despite an exhaustive search, the Brazier family was unable to find their beloved Bobbie and continued their trip before returning home, expecting never to see their friend again.

Six months later, guess who appeared waiting on the steps of the family home? It was Bobbie! His paws were worn and bloody. He was emaciated and exhausted. He had traveled 2,551 miles back to his home after crossing plains, the Rocky Mountains during the coldest part of winter, desert, various rivers and perhaps even lakes at an average speed of about 14 miles per day. The news of Bobbie's adventure went national.

People who had fed and sheltered Bobbie on his journey wrote the family to tell about their time with him. The Humane Society of Portland used these stories to piece together a relatively precise description of the route Bobbie took. They concluded that after returning to Wolcott, unable to find his owners, Bobbie initially followed the family's route into northeast Indiana. He then searched in several directions, apparently seeking their scent. Eventually, he headed west. During their original trip, the Braziers had parked in a service station each night. Bobbie revisited each of these stops on his journey, along with a number of homes, and even a homeless camp.

As Bobbie learned, there's no place like home. Today, we're going to see how the Israelites concluded the long and weary journey to their home in the Promised Land. You may recall their journey started with just:

1. 70 people of the family of Jacob (renamed Israel) who left the land of Canaan and went to Egypt.
2. They ended up being slaves there for about 400 years.
3. Moses led them to freedom across the Red Sea.
4. Shortly after, Joshua at age 20 led a battle against the Amalekites and defeated them.
5. He spied out the land of Canaan and brought back a good report.
6. He became Moses' protegee and successor.

7. After 40 years of wilderness wandering, Moses took land east of the Jordan River.
8. Moses died and Joshua took over leadership.
9. Joshua led the Israelites across the Jordan.
10. They camped at Gilgal and then defeated Jericho, Ai, and defended the Gibeonites from five kings.

That was quite a journey for a couple of a million people, but they weren't done.

Last time in our trek through the book of Joshua, we saw Caleb and Joshua by faith take possession of the land given to them despite giants and chariots opposing them. Their tribes of Judah and Ephraim as well as the half-tribe of Manasseh took their possession. Previously, the tribes of Ruben, Gad, and the other half-tribe of Manasseh had taken their possession outside the Promised land on the east side of the Jordan River. That left seven more tribes as well as the tribe of Levi still without their home. Today, we will travel with them as after over four hundred years of slavery, forty years of wandering, and many more years of fighting wars, they finally too made it home.

Associated with this possession of the Promised Land were specific boundaries. We could read them, but they'd end up a lot like something we still do today. Here's an example:

*Beginning at an Existing Concrete Monument being North 88 degrees 59 minutes 39 seconds East 310.53 feet from an Existing Iron Pipe at the right-of-way ... Said concrete monument having Grid Coordinates of : North = 741, 548.796, East = 2,036,729.004. Running thence South 21 degrees 15 minutes 11 seconds East 24.88.*

Can anyone guess what that excerpt might be? It's part of a deed of easement granted to the property where I live – my home.

Now, let's look at a brief sample from the Bible itself for the first allotment which was given (if you recall) to the tribe of Judah:

### **Portion of the Promised Land given to Judah**

*Joshua Chapter 15*

*[1] This then was the lot of the tribe of the children of Judah by their families; even to the border of Edom the wilderness of Zin southward was the uttermost part of the south coast.*

*[2] And their south border was from the shore of the salt sea [Dead Sea], from the bay that look[s] southward:*

*[3] And it went out to the south side to Maaleh-acrabbim, and passed along to Zin, and ascended up on the south side unto Kadesh-barnea, and passed along to Hezron, and went up to Adar, and fetched a compass to Karkaa:*

*[4] From the[re] it passed toward Azmon, and went out unto the river of Egypt; and the goings out of that coast were at the sea [Mediterranean Sea]: this shall be your south coast.*

*[5] And the east border was the salt sea [Dead Sea], even unto the end of Jordan. And their border in the north quarter was from the bay of the sea [Dead Sea] at the uttermost part of*

*Jordan...*

We'll stop there. The chapters we're covering today contain extensive geographic details like this that map out the division of the land given to seven of twelve tribes of Israel.

Joshua upbraided the seven tribes for not taking possession of their lots (Joshua 18:3).

*Chapter 18*

*[1] And the whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled together at Shiloh, and set up the tabernacle of the congregation there. And the land was subdued before them.*

*[2] And there remained among the children of Israel **seven tribes**, which had not yet received their inheritance.*

*[3] And Joshua said unto the children of Israel, How **long** are ye **slack** to go to possess the land, which the LORD God of your fathers ha[s] given you?*

### **What means did Joshua prescribe to complete dividing the land?**

1. Each of these seven tribes shall send to Joshua three men (Joshua 18:4).
2. Joshua will send them out to describe the remaining portion of the Promised Land not already occupied (Joshua 18:4).
3. Those sent will divide the land into seven parts (Joshua 18:5).
4. The group sent will present the description of the land to Joshua (Joshua 18:6).
5. Joshua will cast lots to assign to each remaining tribe its portion of the land (Joshua 18:6).
6. Joshua would cast the lots in Shiloh at the door of the tabernacle (Joshua 18:8; Joshua 19:51).

### **Benjamin (1)**

The first lot went to the tribe of Benjamin. It's interesting to note we still use the word *lot* to describe divisions of land. The tribe of Benjamin received a strip land just north of Judah that started around Jericho and went west nearly to the Mediterranean Sea.

### **Simeon (2)**

The tribe of Judah wanted less land. The tribe of Simeon settled in southern portion of Judah from the south tip of the Dead Sea to the Mediterranean and down to the wilderness of Zin.

### **Zebulun (3)**

Zebulun received land west of the Sea of Galilee.

### **Issachar (4)**

Issachar was just south of Zebulun.

### **Asher (5)**

Asher received a coastal strip roughly from Mt. Carmel to Tyre.

### **Naphtali (6)**

The lot given to Naphtali extended from southernmost Sea of Galilee to Mount Lebanon between Asher and the northern section of the Jordan River.

### Dan (7)

Of those seven allotments the most interesting involves the seventh one.

*Joshua 19*

*40 The seventh lot came out for the tribe of the people of Dan, according to their clans.*

The territory given to Dan was south central coastal in the area around and including today's Tel Aviv. You've heard the expression, "from Dan to Beersheba" to refer to the land of Israel. But Beersheba is at the southern extent of the Promised Land. What about all of the Promised Land north of the allotment given to Dan?

The problem with that was that the Philistines lived in this area and the idolatrous people of Dan neither followed nor depended upon the LORD. Joshua 19 goes on to say:

*47 When the territory of the people of Dan was lost to them, the people of Dan went up and fought against Leshem [way up north], and after capturing it and striking it with the sword they took possession of it and settled in it, calling Leshem, Dan, after the name of Dan their ancestor.*

In the book of Judges, we learn some more details about this campaign:

*Judges 18*

*1 .... And in those days the tribe of the people of Dan was seeking for itself an inheritance to dwell in, for until then no inheritance among the tribes of Israel had fallen to them.*

Notice here, Dan had been given a specific lot of land, but Dan did not go in to possess it out of fear of the Philistines.

*27 But the people of Dan ... came to Laish [that they renamed to Leshem], to a people quiet and unsuspecting, and struck them with the edge of the sword and burned the city with fire.*

*28 And there was no deliverer because it was far from Sidon, and they had no dealings with anyone. It was in the valley [not far from Mount Herman]. Then they rebuilt the city and lived in it.*

So rather depending on the LORD to defeat the people in the land He had given to them, the people of Dan went way up north and took the land from a much weaker, defenseless, idolatrous people there. The tribe of Dan was right at home in that idolatrous area. With that final home of the tribe of Dan, the expression "from Dan [northernmost Israel] to Beersheba [southernmost Israel] finally makes sense.

### Application

We'll stop there for today. But before we go, let's wrap up by first doing a final update on the Artemis I moon mission and then seeing how all of this relates to our lives. You may recall last month during the full moon, NASA sent a space capsule to the moon. In the capsule were a three dummies. (These days, they're not hard to find!) The capsule traveled to orbit the moon and then safely returned to earth about a week ago -- also during a full moon. The dummies made it home!

If we can be happy for dummies, how much more happy can we be for Christians. You see, this world is **not** our home.

### Philippians 3

*[20] For our [citizenship] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:*

*[21] Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.*

Then in John 17 – Jesus' high-priestly prayer for us – we read:

#### John 17

*[14] I have given them [those following Him] thy word; and the world ha[s] hated them, because **they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.***

There's a certain nostalgia about being home – especially during this time of year. Perhaps you feel that way sometimes – but **home** is not really about a **place** as much as it is about **our relationships with loved ones**. I know I've moved so many times during my life, it's hard to say which home is the one to be nostalgic about.

Remember Bobbie. He didn't go straight home. No, he searched for his **family**. (It's being with our **loved ones** that really matters isn't it?) He followed the scent of his **family** with miraculous drive and stamina to go thousands of miles to finally reunite with **them**.

We who know the LORD are a long way from home too. As Christians, we know our **real home** is **not** on this earth. It's in heaven with the LORD. May we have that same passion as Bobbie did as we continue our journey to our true **home** to reunite with **loved ones** ahead of us and meet our loving bridegroom the LORD Jesus Christ who is there preparing a place for us – waiting to welcome us **home** when we finally arrive in glory to forever be with Him.

### Benediction

*The LORD bless thee, and **keep** thee:*

*The LORD make his face **shine** upon thee, and be gracious unto thee:*

*The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. (Numbers 6:24-26)*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K8U92KgcJLY>