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June 14th: Joshua 14 & Luke 23:50—24:12

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Caleb and the apportioning of the land. The burial and the empty tomb.

Reflections upon the readings from the ACNA Book of Common Prayer (<http://bcp2019.anglicanchurch.net/>).

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Transcript

Joshua 14. These are the inheritances that the people of Israel received in the land of Canaan, which Eliezer the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the fathers' houses of the tribes of the people of Israel, gave them to inherit. Their inheritance was by lot, just as the Lord had commanded by the hand of Moses for the nine and one-half tribes.

For Moses had given an inheritance to the two and one-half tribes beyond the Jordan, but to the Levites he gave no inheritance among them. For the people of Joseph were two tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim, and no portion was given to the Levites in the land, but only cities to dwell in, with their pasture lands for their livestock and their substance. The people of Israel did as the Lord commanded Moses, they allotted the land.

Then the people of Judah came to Joshua at Gilgal, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him, You know what the Lord said to Moses the man of God in Kadesh

Barnea concerning you and me? I was 40 years old when Moses the servant of the Lord sent me from Kadesh Barnea to spy out the land, and I brought him word again as it was in my heart. But my brothers who went up with me made the heart of the people melt, yet I wholly followed the Lord my God. And Moses swore on that day, saying, Surely the land on which your foot has trodden shall be an inheritance for you and your children forever, because you have wholly followed the Lord my God.

And now behold the Lord has kept me alive, just as he said, these 45 years since the time that the Lord spoke this word to Moses, while Israel walked in the wilderness. And now behold I am this day 85 years old. I am still as strong today as I was in the day that Moses sent me.

My strength now is as my strength was then, for war and for going and coming. So now give me this hill country of which the Lord spoke on that day, for you heard on that day how the Anakim were there, with great fortified cities. It may be that the Lord will be with me, and I shall drive them out just as the Lord said.

Then Joshua blessed him, and he gave Hebron to Caleb the son of Jephunneh for an inheritance. Therefore Hebron became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite to this day, because he wholly followed the Lord the God of Israel. Now the name of Hebron formerly was Kiriath Abba.

Abba was the greatest man among the Anakim, and the land had rest from war. In Joshua chapter 14 the main conquest has occurred, and we are in the part of the book concerned with the division of the land. The land is divided by lot for the nine and a half tribes within it, as the Lord had instructed Moses back in Numbers chapter 26 verses 52 to 56.

The Lord spoke to Moses saying, Among these the land shall be divided for inheritance according to the number of names. To a large tribe you shall give a large inheritance, and to a small tribe you shall give a small inheritance. Every tribe shall be given its inheritance in proportion to its list, but the land shall be divided by lot.

According to the names of the tribes of their fathers they shall inherit. Their inheritance shall be divided according to lot between the larger and the smaller. The lot is used because the Lord is distributing the land.

This is distributing by divine providence, not by negotiation among themselves. Jacob had twelve sons, but Joseph received a double portion. Both of his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, were treated as full tribes.

Levi didn't receive a portion, but was scattered through the land according to the judgment given by Jacob in Genesis chapter 49 verses 5 to 7. Simeon and Levi are brothers, weapons of violence are their swords. Let my soul come not into their counsel.

Oh my glory be not joined to their company, for in their anger they killed men, and in their willfulness they hamstrung oxen.

Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce, and their wrath, for it is cruel. I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel. In chapter 19 we discover that although they do receive an allotted portion, Simeon's portion is within the tribal land of Judah.

They don't have a separate territory of their own. Levi doesn't receive an allotted portion at all, but is scattered throughout the entirety of the land with their own cities and pasture lands. Manasseh is divided into two parts.

One half is in the Transjordan, in the territory of the former Amorite kings, and the other half is within the land. Reuben and Gad are also in the Transjordan, which means that there are nine and a half tribes among whom to divide the territory of the land. Eliezer, the son of Aaron, appointed at the end of Numbers chapter 20, and Joshua oversee the whole process.

Caleb is mentioned at the beginning of the allotment of the land, and Joshua is mentioned at the very end in chapter 19 verses 49 to 50. When they had finished distributing the several territories of the land as inheritances, the people of Israel gave an inheritance among them to Joshua the son of Nan. By command of the Lord, they gave him the city that he asked, Timnath-sira, in the hill country of Ephraim, and he rebuilt the city and settled in it.

Caleb and Joshua were, of course, the two faithful spies back in Numbers chapter 13 and 14. The fact that the inheritance of the tribes within the land is flanked by the inheritance of these two men underlines the importance of their earlier faithfulness, and also the way in which they are the two persons who set the pattern for this new Israel. Caleb is the leading voice in favor of entry into the land in Numbers, and now he gets his inheritance first.

He is described as a descendant of a Kenazite, which are listed among the peoples of the land in Genesis chapter 15 verse 19. If this is the same people group, then it would seem that Caleb was of Gentile descent. However, he was also a head of the people of Judah.

Israel always had a number of people who weren't direct biological descendants of Abraham, who assimilated into the people. They left Egypt surrounded by a mixed multitude, which would presumably become part of the people over time. Joshua's family were likely among the Gentile people that became part of Israel.

We should also bear in mind that Israel is in a very early stage of nation-building, and that both the tribal and national level structures are likely fairly rudimentary at this point. Being situated within the land will give these structures place to form and develop. However, much of Israel's life in the book of Judges, for instance, is still highly

regionalized.

Caleb recalls the events of the spying out of the land, and the promise that Moses made to him at that time, that he should inherit the land on which his foot had trodden. This was stated in Deuteronomy chapter 1 verses 35 to 36. Not one of these men of this evil generation shall see the good land that I swore to give to your fathers, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh.

He shall see it. And to him and to his children I will give the land on which he has trodden, because he has wholly followed the Lord. That was 45 years ago, which gives a figure for the length of time taken in the conquest.

Caleb was 40 at the time of spying out the land, in the second year of the wilderness period. They wandered for 38 years after that, which suggests that the conquest to this point took seven years. Now the Canaanites were not fully driven out.

Canaanites had also reoccupied some of the places where they had previously been driven out. Even into the book of 2nd Samuel, the Israelites are still dealing with pockets of Canaanite possession in the land. Caleb is confident, however, in the promise and the empowering of the Lord, and requests the very part of the land whose inhabitants most excited the fear of the Israelites back in the book of Numbers.

In chapter 13 verse 22, Even though he is now 85 years old, Caleb has great energy and vigor and continued confidence in the promise of the Lord. It might also be interesting to observe that Hebron was first mentioned in Genesis chapter 13 verses 17 to 18, immediately after the Lord made a similar promise to Abraham as he made to Caleb. Hebron is the place where Abraham, Isaac and Jacob primarily sojourned, and it is in that region that they were buried.

It is also the site where David's kingdom would later begin. It does not seem to be accidental that this is the place where land is apportioned first. Furthermore, as a head, and now perhaps the head of Judah, Caleb precedes Judah, the first tribe in the list of the inheritance, as its leader.

This passage concerning Caleb is an example of what Richard Nelson has called a land-grant narrative, a story in which a person or a group argues that land should be given to them. There are a number of other examples in chapter 15 verses 18 to 19, Axa's request to her father Caleb, in chapter 17 verses 3 to 6, the daughters of Zelophehad, chapter 17 verses 14 to 18, the people of Joseph, and chapter 21 verses 1 to 3, the heads of the houses of the Levites. We read the outcome of Caleb's land-grant and a land-grant that he gives in turn in chapter 15 verses 13 to 19.

According to the commandment of the Lord to Joshua, he gave to Caleb the son of Jephunneh, a portion among the people of Judah, Kiriath-Aba, that is Hebron. Aba was

the father of Anak. And Caleb drove out from there the three sons of Anak, Shishai, and Haman, and Tolmai, the descendants of Anak.

And he went up from there against the inhabitants of Debea. Now the name of Debea formerly was Kiriath-Sephah. And Caleb said, whoever strikes Kiriath-Sephah and captures it, to him will I give Axa my daughter as wife.

And Aphnel the son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb, captured it. And he gave him Axa his daughter as wife. When she came to him, she urged him to ask her father for a field.

And she got off her donkey. And Caleb said to her, What do you want? She said to him, Give me a blessing, since you have given me the land of the Negev, give me also springs of water. And he gave her the upper springs and the lower springs.

This account then with the initial request of Caleb bookends the entirety of Judah's allotment. The statement that Hebron became the inheritance of Caleb to this day recalls statements made about Rahab in chapter 6 verse 25 and about the Gibeonites in chapter 9 verse 27. Caleb is another person of non-Israelite origins who now settles as one of or among Israel in the land.

The chapter ends with the statement that the land had rest from war. The Lord is establishing a Sabbath within the land and giving his people peace within it. A question to consider.

Caleb is told that he will inherit the land on which he walks. This is a promise that was first given to Abraham and then to Israel as a whole. How does the depiction of Caleb in the book of Joshua present him as a model Israelite? Luke chapter 23 verse 50 to chapter 24 verse 12.

Now there was a man named Joseph from the Jewish town of Arimathea. He was a member of the council, a good and righteous man who had not consented to their decision and action and he was looking for the kingdom of God. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.

Then he took it down and wrapped it in a linen shroud and laid him in a tomb cut in stone where no one had ever yet been laid. It was the day of preparation and the Sabbath was beginning. The women who had come with him from Galilee followed and saw the tomb and how his body was laid.

Then they returned and prepared spices and ointments. On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment. But on the first day of the week at early dawn they went to the tomb taking the spices they had prepared and they found the stone rolled away from the tomb but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

While they were perplexed about this behold two men stood by them in dazzling apparel

and as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground the men said to them, why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here but has risen. Remember how he told you while he was still in Galilee that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise. And they remembered his words and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest.

Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the Apostles. But these words seemed to them an idle tale and they did not believe them. But Peter rose and ran to the tomb stooping and looking in he saw the linen cloths by themselves and he went home marveling at what had happened.

At the end of Luke chapter 23 we are introduced to Joseph of Arimathea. He's a character we've never heard of before but he's a member of the council which is surprising considering the part that the council had just played in the condemnation of Jesus to his death. However Joseph had not consented to the council's decision.

He is described as a good and righteous man who was looking for the kingdom of God. This might recall the characterization of figures such as Simeon at the beginning of the book of Luke. In chapter 2 verse 25 now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon and this man was righteous and devout waiting for the consolation of Israel and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

Joseph requests the body of Jesus which he takes down and wraps in linen garments and lays in the tomb. We might perhaps think about the clothes of the high priest on the day of atonement where he wears linen garments for the ritual but we might also think about the very beginning of the gospel where Jesus was wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger. There we also had a Joseph and a Mary.

The death and resurrection of Christ is a new birth event. There the sign given to the shepherds was that they would see the baby wrapped in swaddling clothes laying in a manger. Now the sign given to new shepherds will be seeing the linen garments laid to one side and the body removed.

There is also another fulfillment of Isaiah chapter 53 here more specifically verse 9. He makes his grave with a rich man at his death. Jesus is buried in a way that shows honor to his body not in a common criminal's grave. It's cut into the rock like stones taken from a quarry.

Maybe we should think of Isaiah chapter 51 verse 1. Listen to me you who pursue righteousness, you who seek the Lord, look to the rock from which you were hewn and to the quarry from which you were dug. Jesus is the great stone that will become the chief cornerstone of the new temple, quarried from the rock as it were. The women were

present at the cross.

They're present to see the burial, they know where the body has been placed and they're present on the morning of resurrection. They are in many ways the heart of the faithful community at this point. While we can often focus upon the male disciples as the appointed leaders and guardians of the people of Christ, Luke gives a lot of attention to the women in the narrative, most notably Elizabeth and Mary, but even beyond that we can see the characters of the women coming to the foreground in the Gospel of Luke to a greater degree than in some of the other Gospels.

Luke will often have male-female pairings such as Simeon and Anna in the temple. So it seems that Luke wants us to pay attention to the women as examples of faith and perhaps one of the ways that we can learn from them is that even when faith seems to fail there can remain the commitment of love and that is the thing that really ties them to Christ at this point more than anything else. The resting of the women on the Sabbath parallels Jesus resting in the tomb on the Sabbath while the start of the new chapter introduces the first day of a new creation.

Perhaps we might see the women's bringing spices and oils to the tomb and encountering angels as something of a parallel to Zacharias performing of the rite of incense in the temple and encountering an angel at the beginning of the Gospel. The stone is rolled away and Jesus' body is nowhere to be found. Two angels appear.

Why do you seek the living among the dead? The angels remind the women that Jesus had told them that he would rise way back in Galilee in Luke chapter 9 verses 21 to 22 and he strictly charged and commanded them to tell this to no one saying the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and on the third day be raised. For the disciples the period after the resurrection is going to be in large measure one of remembering what Jesus had taught them earlier but which they had failed to grasp. It's like the end of a detective novel where the mystery has been solved and suddenly the reader looks back and all of the clues fall into place and they realize that it had to be this way, that the truth was there all the way along and they just hadn't had the eyes to see it.

Had it occurred just by itself the empty tomb would just have been a weird and random event. The resurrection is not a random miracle. The resurrection makes sense when it's read against the background of the Old Testament prophecies, when it's read against the background of Jesus' earlier statements.

It's that background that gives the resurrection its meaning. Yet the women arrive on the site of a mystery, an empty tomb and a rolled away stone and then the two men appear and give them clues to start to figure it out. When this is seen against the backdrop of Jesus' ministry and his foretelling of it, it will start to make sense and importantly understanding arises from memory.

The women return to tell the Eleven what has occurred. They have faith but the men do not believe them, thinking that they are giving an unreliable account. The names of the women are given to us at this point, Mary Magdalene, Joanna and Mary the mother of James and there are other women with them.

They are paralleled with the Eleven Apostles. It would seem that Peter was among them at this point and the rest who were with them. The names of the women matter, not least because their personal eyewitness would support Luke's narrative.

For many years after these events, after the time of the writing of the gospel as well, people who read it could go and find people who are mentioned within it, who bore witness to specific events recorded within it. This would be of course nowhere more important than in reference to the resurrection accounts. Peter alone seems to take the message of the women with more seriousness and he goes to the tomb and stoops and looks inside.

The linen cloths are lying by themselves. Perhaps this is like the high priest on the Day of Atonement. Jesus is leaving the linen garments behind and is clothed with the glorious garments of the resurrection.

A question to consider, what further connections can we see between the nativity and childhood accounts in the Gospel of Luke and the accounts of the death and resurrection of Christ?