

The Lord's Command to Go In and Possess the Land of Canaan

Joshua 1:1-9

Joshua 1:1-9 - *“After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, it came to pass that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses’ assistant, saying: ² “Moses My servant is dead. Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them—the children of Israel. ³ Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses. ⁴ From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the River Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your territory. ⁵ No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you. ⁶ Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. ⁷ Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. ⁸ This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. ⁹ Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”*

Background Notes

The book of Joshua is the inspired record of Israel’s conquest of Canaan. Moses had led the children of Israel out of Egypt and through the wilderness for forty years. Moses was now dead and Joshua, Moses’ helper, was given the leadership role. Joshua was not a new, young, raw recruit -- no way! General Joshua was already experienced and battle-hardened.

The first mention of Joshua is in Exodus 17, where he led the army of Israel against the Amalekites in the wilderness. Exodus 17:10 - *“So Joshua did as Moses said to him, and fought with Amalek. And Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.”* And verse 13: *“So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.”* Numbers 13-14 tell us that Joshua was one of the two faithful spies that Moses sent into the land. Joshua and Caleb were the only spies who showed faith and courage, and as a result, they were the only two people from that former generation to enter the Promised Land. So General Joshua was a faithful, courageous and battle-hardened leader, who was available for service. Joshua is a great example for us to follow.

In verse 4 we read about the extent of the land that God gave to Israel: *“From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the River Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your territory.”* Israel never possessed all of this land. During the reign of King Solomon, Israel’s control extended to these boundaries, but to this date, Israel has never yet possessed all of this land that God gave them.

Doctrinal / Teaching Points

1. There is a land of spiritual blessings for the believer's enjoyment.

In 1 Corinthians 10 we read about the events that took place as Israel journeyed from Egypt to Canaan. 1 Corinthians 10:11 says, *“Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.”* The word “examples” here is the Greek word meaning “types.” A “type” is an Old Testament person, place, event, or other item that illustrates or pictures New Testament truth. So 1 Corinthians 10 is saying that all the events that happened to the children of Israel from Egypt to Canaan are types, or pictures.

The conquest and possession of the land of Canaan by God’s people in the Old Testament is a spiritual picture of the spiritual land to be possessed by God’s people today. What is that “spiritual land”? It is the spiritual blessings God has given to every believer. Ephesians 1:3 - *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ...”* Here we read that God has given **every** believer **every** spiritual blessing! A list of our spiritual blessing is given in the first half of Ephesians 1.

Notice that these blessings are not **physical** blessings, but **spiritual blessings**. It’s nice to be blessed with physical blessings like good health and plenty of money, and we can thank the Lord for physical blessings when He gives them to us, but physical blessings are not guaranteed to the Christian (in spite of what the “prosperity gospel” preachers say!). Here is the point: every spiritual blessing (notice, not every spiritual gift, but every spiritual **blessing**) is already ours in Christ in heavenly places. if you’re a Christian. If you’re a Christian, there’s not one spiritual blessing that God has to offer that is not already yours in Christ!

What about this word, “heavenly places”? “Heavenly places” is not heaven! Heaven is in the future for the Christian. “Heavenly places” is that sphere or realm of spiritual realities now, in the present. It’s the spiritual land that God has given us.

Look at the parallel between Ephesians 1:3 and Joshua 1:3. In Joshua 1:3 we read *“Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses.”* And Ephesians 1:3 - *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ...”* Do you see the parallel and the spiritual picture that we have in the book of Joshua? The land of Canaan was given to God’s people for enjoyment. All they had to do was go in and possess it. The land of spiritual blessings is given to God’s people today -- but we have to go in and possess it and occupy the land!

Ephesians 1:3 tells us that the land of spiritual blessings is for **every** Christian to enjoy. But you may say, “I’m not experiencing and enjoying my spiritual blessings in Christ.” Well, if that is true, it’s not because God hasn’t given them to you. In order to enjoy them, you must appropriate and live in the good of these blessings. You must “enter and possess the land!”

Do you want to play around in the world? You can't enjoy your spiritual blessing of being in the family of God if you want to play around in the world. Or maybe right now you doubt your salvation. Let me ask you – if you could have a billion dollars or assurance of your salvation, what would you take? Your choice may be an indication of whether you've entered the land of spiritual blessing or not! And if you were to say you'd like both, that may also be an indication of whether you've entered the land of spiritual blessings or not. You must enter and possess the land of spiritual blessings that God has given you in order to experience and enjoy these spiritual blessings. There's a land of spiritual blessings for the believer's enjoyment.

2. There is a land of spiritual battles for the believer's victory.

The land of Canaan was a land flowing with milk and honey, but it was also a land where there were enemies. The land of blessings was also a land of battles. This is true of the spiritual land that God wants us to possess.

Spiritual battles as well as spiritual blessings are found in the heavenly places. Ephesians 6:11-12 says, "*Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.*" Do you see why "heavenly places" is not heaven for the believer? When we get to heaven our spiritual battles will be over, but right now there is spiritual warfare in the realm of spiritual realities.

Here's the good news: you never have to be defeated in spiritual warfare! You can always be a winner, just as Israel was guaranteed victory in the land if they would obey and follow the Lord. In the same way, we are guaranteed victory if we put on the whole armor of God and walk with the Lord.

Now let's face it -- we are not always victorious. We suffer defeat from doubt and discouragement and temptation. But here's the point: we **don't have** to be defeated -- because God has enabled us to defeat the devil and his schemes! There is a land of spiritual battles for the believer's victory.

Practical Application

Let's follow God's prerequisites for prosperity.

"Prerequisites" are the things that we must do before we can experience prosperity. Notice -- when we say prosperity, we are not referring to the "prosperity gospel" idea of perpetual good health and great wealth! No, we're talking about spiritual prosperity – enjoying our spiritual blessings in Christ, and winning the spiritual battles that we face.

What are the prerequisites? Look at the end of verse 8: "*This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.*"

The first prerequisite is certainly to believe God's promises. In verse 5 God said, "*No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you.*" Look at the promise in verse 9: "*the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.*" **Great promises!** Do you believe God's promises? It's a prerequisite for spiritual success and prosperity.

The second prerequisite is to be strong and courageous (v7). Third, just as Israel was to observe and obey all the law of God, so we are to be obedient Christians. In addition, just as Israel was to meditate on the Word of God day and night (v8), we are to meditate continuously on the Word of God. Don't rush your Bible study! How much time do we put in on personal Bible study?

Do you want to be spiritually prosperous and successful? Let's follow God's prerequisites for prosperity!