

The Israelites Prepare to Cross the Jordan River

Joshua 1:10-18

Joshua 1:10-18 - *"Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, ¹¹ "Pass through the camp and command the people, saying, 'Prepare provisions for yourselves, for within three days you will cross over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land which the LORD your God is giving you to possess.'"*

¹² *And to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh Joshua spoke, saying, ¹³ "Remember the word which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, saying, 'The LORD your God is giving you rest and is giving you this land.' ¹⁴ Your wives, your little ones, and your livestock shall remain in the land which Moses gave you on this side of the Jordan. But you shall pass before your brethren armed, all your mighty men of valor, and help them, ¹⁵ until the LORD has given your brethren rest, as He gave you, and they also have taken possession of the land which the LORD your God is giving them. Then you shall return to the land of your possession and enjoy it, which Moses the LORD's servant gave you on this side of the Jordan toward the sunrise."*

¹⁶ *So they answered Joshua, saying, "All that you command us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. ¹⁷ Just as we heeded Moses in all things, so we will heed you. Only the LORD your God be with you, as He was with Moses. ¹⁸ Whoever rebels against your command and does not heed your words, in all that you command him, shall be put to death. Only be strong and of good courage."*

Background Notes

The book of Exodus is the inspired account of how God led His people out of Egypt under the leadership of Moses. The book of Joshua is the inspired record of how God led His people into the Promised Land under the leadership of Joshua. The first half of the book of Joshua, chapters 1-12, is the record of how Israel went in and conquered the Land. The second half of the book, chapters 13-24, is how Israel divided up the Land and possessed the Land.

The Promised Land is the land where the nation of Israel is located today. This is the Land that God promised to the Jewish people, the physical descendants of Abraham. That covenant with Abraham is found in Genesis 12: *"Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land."*

The promise of the Land was part of the Abrahamic Covenant, and we believe that the Abrahamic Covenant is still valid today. God owns the world, and it's His right to give the land to whomever He chooses. Well, He gave the land of Canaan to Israel -- and the contract is still valid! The Abrahamic Covenant was an unconditional covenant, but the full right to the use and the enjoyment of the Land would only be fulfilled when Israel was following the Lord. Also, the Abrahamic Covenant and the biblical right to the land could not be used as a justification if the present secular state of Israel started to do anything it wants to reclaim this Promised Land.

However, Romans 11 shows that the Abrahamic Covenant is still valid, and it is not to be spiritualized away! Romans 11 assures us that there a spiritual revival will come in the future, and many Jewish people will turn to the Messiah, the One they once rejected. Then the Lord will come and make sure that Israel's enemies are overcome! The land will be given to the nation of Israel -- and this great time may actually happen in the near future.

A few months ago we were talking with a Jewish Christian in Jerusalem who has been serving the Lord in Israel for 25 years. He told us that there has been more interest in Jesus as the Messiah this past year than ever before. He has even had people knock on his door, wanting to know more about Jesus! Great days are ahead for the nation of Israel!

Doctrinal / Teaching Points

1. God wants His people in the land He has given them.

In our first Talk from Joshua, we learned that the Promised Land that God gave to His people in the Old Testament is a picture of the spiritual land of blessings that God has given to His people today. We also learned that while God gave the land of Canaan to His people, they still had to go in and possess it and occupy the land. Do you see the spiritual picture and spiritual parallel? We too, must go in and appropriate and possess and occupy the spiritual land of blessings the Lord has given us. And here's the point, God wants us to do so!

God wants His people in the land He has promised them. Where do we see that doctrine or teaching taught here in Joshua 1? We see it in the case study of the 2 1/2 tribes in verse 12 - "...the Reubenites, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh..." Back in Numbers 32, these tribes came to Moses and asked if they could settle on the east side of the Jordan River. God wanted all His people to cross over the Jordan and live in the land, but the 2 1/2 tribes didn't want to cross over because they liked the looks of the land on the east side of the Jordan River, the land toward the sunrise (v15). The 2 1/2 tribes saw that it was good grazing land for their livestock, and they thought that it was more a more protected land for their wives and children.

In other words, they didn't fully trust the Lord, and they didn't show complete faith in the Lord. Numbers 32 tells us that the Lord was not pleased with this attitude, and the 2 1/2 tribes were rebuked for their lack of faith.

Nevertheless, the Lord allowed these 2 1/2 tribes to live on the east side of the Jordan. However, He made one condition: that the military men of these tribes would come across the Jordan River and fight with the rest of the tribes until the Land was conquered. Then they could go home to their wives and children and livestock on the east side of the Jordan River. In Joshua 1, Joshua reminded the 2 1/2 tribes of their obligation and commitment, and they agreed to it.

Do you see the spiritual lesson here? God wants His people in the spiritual land that He has given us – enjoying the spiritual blessings and fighting the spiritual battles without defeat. He doesn't want us to be "wandering in the wilderness" of Christian experience! He doesn't want us to be half-hearted Christians or borderline Christians, like the 2 1/2 tribes –

straddling the Jordan, or temporarily coming into the land to do little fighting of spiritual battles, but then running back to the world.

The Lord wants us to dwell in the land -- but He will not force us. As with Israel, God allows us to be only as committed as we choose. There is the permissive will of God. But remember that the Lord would rather have His people in the land that He has given us. God wants His people in the land He has given them.

2. God wants His people with the courage He has given them.

Why did the 2 ½ tribes fail to follow the Lord's will, 100%? It was because of lack of faith and lack of courage! Notice that they admired faith and courage in others, and they realized its importance. Joshua 1:17 - "*Just as we heeded Moses in all things, so we will heed you. Only the LORD your God be with you, as He was with Moses.*" They knew what faith and courage were all about and they admired it in others, but they lacked 100% commitment themselves.

Notice that they did show some courage in sending their military men across to help conquer the enemy -- but they didn't have the courage to believe that God would protect their wives and children in the land. They were not fully courageous. They didn't avail themselves of the courage that God would have given them.

What about us? Do we have the courage to obey all that the Lord has commanded us? Do we have we have the courage to believe that God will do everything He has promised, or do we hold back from full commitment because we are afraid? Are we afraid that God will not take care of us financially if we commit ourselves 100%? Are we afraid that God will not take care of our families if we commit ourselves 100%? Are we afraid that God will leave us stranded somewhere -- maybe in a hospital, or maybe alone in a foreign land -- if we commit ourselves 100%? Listen, folks, God is not like that! 2 Timothy 1:7 says, "*For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.*" Do you believe this promise? When God calls us to live for Him 100%, and be 100% committed to Him, He gives us the courage to do so. God wants His people to avail themselves of the courage that He has given them.

Practical Application

Don't belittle a fellow believer who is from "the 2 1/2 tribes"!

Do you understand this practical application? We've been saying that the 2 ½ tribes fell short of all that God wanted of them and for them, but remember they were still God's people! God allowed them to choose partial commitment, and He allowed them to live in the land they wanted on the east side of the Jordan River. They did send their armies over the Jordan River to help conquer the land and the enemy, and God did say that they could then go back and enjoy their land on the east side of the Jordan River.

So don't belittle a fellow believer from the 2 ½ tribes. Some Christians may not be 100% committed -- but they're not zero percent committed either! And let's face it folks, we're all "2½-tribers" to one degree or another. Most of us would have to admit that although we may be committed in certain areas of our lives, we're not so committed in others. Many of us love to straddle the Jordan River. We like to be in the land with one foot, but in the world with the other foot.

Many years ago, we knew a Christian couple that were probably in the 2 ½ tribe category. Margie and I were newlyweds and we didn't have much money. We were leading our church youth group. We hoped that another couple in the church would get more involved, but they weren't willing to take a step of faith outside their comfort zone or commit themselves to help in the work. However, they had money -- and they supported the youth ministry by practically giving us blank checks to get whatever we needed for the program!

Through this experience we quickly learned that God will still use Christians who are not willing to be 100% committed! SO -- don't belittle a fellow believer from the 2 ½ tribes!