



This morning we continue our series in the Book of Joshua. This is our second week in a new section of the book. In chapters 1-12 we see Israel, led by Joshua, conquering the Promised Land. It's been fast-paced, action-packed and drama-filled. In chapters 13-21, the action slows considerably. In these chapters Joshua divides the land among the 12 tribes of Israel. Joshua's task shifts from leading the Israelites into battle to leading them to settle into their allotment of land. Today we are looking at chapters 15-19. This is the longest and most tedious section in Joshua. These chapters are filled with lots of names and locations that are really hard to pronounce. James Boice in his commentary skips these chapters completely! And while I'm not going to read much from these chapters, I believe it's a mistake to skip them. There are some great lessons we can learn for our lives today.

The Bible is full of promises God has made to his children and one of the biggest promises he made to Israel was the promise of land. The word land is found 87 times because Joshua is a book about Israel entering, conquering and claiming the promised land. This is the same land God promised Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses. "In terms of current political boundaries, the promised land covers modern Israel, the whole of Jordan, a large part of Saudi Arabia, half of Iraq, the whole of Lebanon, part of Syria and the whole of Kuwait!" And while the land was very important to ancient Israelites and to the OT, it has very little significance to us today.

Last week I talked about how "land" in the OT represents the Christian life now. And even though God is no longer in the business of giving land to his people, he has given us the church and life in Christ. Old Testament scholar Bruce Waltke calls this kind of thinking typology. Typology is the study and interpretation of types and symbols in the Bible. The land typifies the church and our life in Jesus Christ. Waltke puts it this way: "The promise that Israel will inherit a land flowing with milk and honey becomes a metaphor for the milk and honey of life in Christ, a participation in heaven itself and in a world that is beyond what saints could imagine or think."

Instead of boring you with long land survey lists and names I can't pronounce, I'd like to look at six ways land can be compared with the church and the Christian life.

## **Six Ways "land" Represents the Church and the Christian Life**

### **Both are gifts from God**

In the book of Genesis, the book of beginnings, God forms a new nation—Israel—and gives it over to the leadership of the great patriarch Abraham. In Genesis 17:6-8, God tells Abraham, *"I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. The whole land of Canaan, where you now reside as a foreigner, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God."* Many years later God tells something similar to Moses, *"See, I have given you this land. Go in and take possession of the land the Lord swore he would give to your fathers—to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—and to their descendants after them"* (Deut. 1:8). The land was given to Israel as a gracious gift from God. And because God created it all and owns it all, he can give anything he wants to his children.

As we fast forward to the NT, we read about another gift from God, *"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Rom. 6:23). The importance of land in the OT shifts to the importance of eternal life in the NT. Land was a gift, but more importantly for us, eternal life, our salvation, is a gift from God. That means we don't earn it and we certainly don't deserve it. Apostle John put it this way, *"Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent"* (John 17:3). The gift God gives us is a person, Jesus Christ. God gives a gift, not because he feels obligated to give it but because his love is so overwhelming. He wants a relationship with us.

Author Paul Tripp writes, "If you're one of God's children, you have been given the most awesome gift that could ever be given. It's gorgeous from every perspective. It's a gift of such grandeur that it's hard to wrap human vocabulary around it and explain it. It's beautiful from every vista. It's the gift that every human being needs. It's a gift that in all of your work and all of your

effort and all of your achievement you couldn't have ever earned; you could have never deserved; you could have never achieved. It is absolutely without question the gift of gifts. It's the gift of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, but I am deeply persuaded in the face of this gift, there are many Christians who are content to play with the box."

So don't play with the box; enjoy the gift of eternal life in Jesus Christ.

### **Both are entered by faith alone**

If you've been following this teaching series through Joshua, you know it took great faith to occupy the promised land. Several times God tells Israel to do something that took incredible faith. They first had to cross the flooded Jordan River. God promises the minute their toes touch the water it will part and they'll all cross over safely. And that's exactly what happened. Soon after, Israel would face their first formidable enemy—the city of Jericho and its warriors. Instead of using any well known military tactics to take the city, God says, I have a better plan. God tells Joshua to line up his armed soldiers in front, put a seven-piece horn section behind them, the Levites with the ark behind them, and a rear guard with more armed soldiers in the back. Once they are in formation, God wanted them to march around the city one time, every day, for six days in complete silence, only with the occasional blowing of the ram horns. Then on the seventh day, they were told to march around the city seven times and when Joshua gave the word, everyone would shout and the walls would fall. That's a ridiculous battle plan. It took faith. And the walls fell and the city was overrun. In the end, there was no doubt God took the city, not Israel. God fought and won the battle of Jericho, not Joshua. But, in faith, they had to obey.

The same is true about the Christian life; it's entered by faith alone. In the Gospel of John we read, *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life"* (John 3:16). The word "believe" is the same word for faith or trust. What John says here is key to understanding the message of the Good News of Jesus Christ. Salvation is a gift that's received only by believing God for it. When you accept Jesus Christ, the gift, by faith, all the blessings of faith come too. Both taking the land and receiving Christ happen by faith alone. Apostle Paul said this, *"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God"* (Eph. 2:8).

### **Both are an inheritance**

I talked lots about this last week, so I'll touch on it here only briefly. Inheritance is a major theme in the book of Joshua and a very important word mentioned about 50 times. For Israel, their inheritance was land. It represented the promises kept by God. The first time we see the word inheritance is in Joshua 11:23, *"So Joshua took the entire land, just as the LORD had directed Moses,*

*and he gave it as an inheritance to Israel according to their tribal divisions. Then the land had rest from war."*

If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, he too has given you an inheritance. And it's much greater than the land. Jesus has given you eternal life; he's given you his great and precious promises; he's left you with the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit; he promises you heaven. Those are all great promises to inherit. But, like Israel, the temptation is to be preoccupied with the inheritance (the land) rather than the giver (God). My big idea last week was, "God's promises are great, but the promised-giver is greatest." If you are a follower of Jesus, our inheritance is Jesus himself and life with him. Jesus is your reward. Jesus is yours to enjoy now and forever in eternity.

### **Both uniquely offer rest and security**

What we see all throughout the OT is a God who fights on behalf of his people. He's constantly going before them and preparing the way so that they can enter his rest and be secure. Speaking to Moses God says, *"But you will cross the Jordan and settle in the land the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, and he will give you rest from all your enemies around you so that you will live in safety"* (Deut. 12:10). Remember, these people lived in very uncertain times. As desert wanderers they constantly worried about enemies and had very little rest or security. But, as they entered and took the promised land, the promise of rest and security was coming true. In Joshua 14:15 we read, *"The land had rest from war."* Ultimately, Israel was learning to trust God for their safety as well. Psalm 91 declares, *"Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, 'He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.'" Israel enters the land and finds physical rest, but not God's Sabbath rest.*

The NT picks up this idea of rest and security. Instead of trusting in land and its borders to give us security, we trust in Jesus who said, *"Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light"* (Matt. 11:29-30). A yoke was put on animals for carrying heavy loads. Jesus invites us to put on his yoke, not the yoke of religion or self-sufficiency, but the yoke of complete rest and security in him. He also invites us to rest in him by obeying the Sabbath, a day we reflect and honor the Lord by ceasing from all our normal work. For us, living in the Bay Area, this is really easy to do! Our problem is we try to find rest and security in ourselves and in our own circumstances, all apart from God. We put on every other yoke except Jesus's. Because we're smart, affluent and busy, it almost becomes a burden to slow down, rest and place our security in God's hands. That leads to anxiety, burnout, busyness, and a constant feeling of being tired. Jesus doesn't want you to live that

way. His invitation is to come to him, lay our burdens down and find rest for our weary souls.

### **Both offer God's unique presence**

Over and over again, God had to remind his people as they enter the land that he is right there with them every step of the way. The land in many ways represented God's presence for Israel. It was the promise of intimacy with God, where like in the garden of Eden, God will be among his people again. God reminded Moses of this and said, *"Do not be terrified by them, for the Lord your God, who is among you, is a great and awesome God"* (Deut. 7:21). Joshua too needed to be reminded constantly of God's presence, *"As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you"* (Josh. 1:5b). The promise of God's presence is the greatest promise in this entire book. It underlines everything God has said. Joshua and all Israel needed constant encouragement and reminders of God's presence. They needed to know that God will never let them down and will never let them go. They needed courage and God gave it to them with the promise of his presence.

One of the great promises of the NT is God's presence with us now and in the new heavens and the new earth. Jesus promised us his ongoing presence in the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Speaking about the Holy Spirit in John 14:18, Jesus said, *"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you."* If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, you have his life living in you right now. No matter what you are going through, Christ is with you.

Not only is he with us now, but he promises to be with us in eternity forever. Listen to these beautiful words, *"And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away'"* (Rev. 21:3-4). God himself will come and live with his people in the new heavens and new earth, aka heaven. And like a loving mother, he will wipe away every painful tear from our eyes.

### **Both have an already-but-not-yet-quality**

Israel occupies the land little by little, but sadly because of their disobedience, they never took it all. And even as they took the land, they were unfulfilled because it was just dirt. Israel was left longing for more. They controlled a majority of the land but had not yet fully received all God had for them. The NT presents this same tension regarding the kingdom of God: it is here "already" but in its fullest sense "not yet." The kingdom of God has already come in the life and person of Jesus Christ, but it won't be fully realized until Jesus comes again and ushers in his new kingdom once and for all. Jesus' kingdom is here already but not yet. In the book of Hebrews, chapter 11, we have the hall of faith: a list

of great women and men who were real-life examples of faith. Here's what it says about them all, *"These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect"* (Heb. 11:39-40). What were they waiting for? What are we waiting for? God's kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven.

When you read the NT you see how often Jesus spoke about the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven. He commanded us to *"seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well"* (Matt. 6:33). So what is his kingdom? In a nutshell, the kingdom of God is God's rule and reign in the hearts of his people. It's God's rule of grace in the world. It's any place where Jesus is viewed as the true king and where his people are working towards justice, mercy, forgiveness and healing. So, the kingdom of God was inaugurated by Jesus and will find its fulfillment when he comes again. Author and church planter Hugh Halter put it this way, "Jesus came to offer an alternative way of life from all the exclusive, religious, sectarian, and sinful ways people live. He called it the Kingdom, and it was huge for people back in the day and also for anyone looking for the real God."

Let me end with an illustration of all this. Imagine a four-year-old boy playing with a toy and then it breaks. He throws a fit and cries out to his parents to fix it. As he's crying, his father says to him, "A distant relative you've never met has just died and left you one hundred million dollars." What will the child's reaction be? He will most likely just cry louder until his toy is fixed. He doesn't have the capacity to realize what's really going on and be comforted. In the same way Christians lack the spiritual capacity to realize all we have in Jesus. This is the reason Paul prays that God would give Christians the spiritual ability to grasp the height, depth, breadth, and length of Christ's salvation (Eph. 3:16-19; Eph. 1:17-18). We are like the four-year-old boy who rests his happiness in his circumstances, rather than recognizing all we have in Christ. In Christ we don't have land, but something far greater:

- He's a gift from God
- It's entered by faith alone
- It's an incredible inheritance
- He offers you rest and security
- He's given you his unique presence
- It has an already-but-not-yet-quality

God has given us Jesus Christ, a much greater inheritance than land. Jesus is the greater Joshua. Jesus is God with us. Through his life, death and resurrection, Jesus makes a deal with us that we can't refuse. He says, "Give me all of your sin. I'll give you all

of my righteousness. And we'll call it even." So, Jesus came to our place, took our place, and invites us back to his place. After Jesus ascended to the right hand of the Father, he gave us the Holy Spirit, a permanent sign of his presence with us. Today, you can be strong and courageous only because God is with you, even to the very end of the age. God wants nothing more today than to

be with you. God wants to spend eternity with you. So he came. He lived. He died. And he promises to be with you forever.

*This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.*

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