

Joshua Chapter 1 Our Full Inheritance in Christ

A.B. Simpson:

The following chapters contain the substance of a series of expositions of the Book of Joshua, designed to unfold the deeper spiritual teachings of this book as a revelation of Christ in His fulness, and as a type of the higher inheritance of faith and peace into which our divine Joshua waits to introduce His faithful people. They do not claim to be so much an exegetical commentary on words and phrases, as a more comprehensive analysis of the general plan and spiritual teachings of the volume, and an exposition of the mind of the Spirit, as He, through these ancient types, unfolds to us our privileges under the Gospel and our full inheritance in Christ. Other volumes sufficiently expound the questions of history, geography, textual criticism, skeptical objections and allusions to manners and customs, and other matters connected with Biblical illustration.

Our object, in harmony with the general purpose of these volumes, namely, to unfold "Christ in the Bible," is, to bring the hearts of our readers into touch, at all points, with the Lord Himself, and the lessons which He designs for their own spiritual life.

There is in all things, a good, a better and a best. That is especially true in our spiritual life. The story of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers is the good, unfolding Israel's redemption from Egypt, and foreshadowing our salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. Deuteronomy and the earlier chapters of Joshua introduce us to the better, Israel's entrance upon the Land of Promise, the type of our sanctification through the Lord Jesus, and by the power of the Holy Ghost. But there is something more than even this, and the later chapters of the Book of Joshua unfold the highest and the best possibilities of our spiritual life.

There were choice possessions in the Land of Promise. There were victories to be won, even after all the land was subdued and the thirty-one kings were conquered. Hebron, Kirjath-Sepher, and Timnath-Serah represented something more than ordinary victory, and point us forward to the prizes of Christian life and the special inheritance of glory awaiting the few, even in the sanctified host of God who are willing to be more than conquerors through Him that loved them.

If this volume shall be used of God to inspire any of God's wandering children to turn from the good to the better, we shall feel deeply thankful. But if we shall have the joy of finding, in the day of harvest, that it has stimulated some of God's consecrated children to press on from the better to the best, and to win some Hebron of love, or Timnath-Serah of cloudless light and incorruptible joy, in the heavenly places which await us even here, we shall feel that the highest purpose of this beautiful, inspired volume which we have sought to unfold has been in some measure accomplished, and that we have not been disappointed in our own humble and most earnest hope and prayer.

CHAPTER 1 -- OUR FULL INHERITANCE IN CHRIST

"Now after the death of Moses, the servant of the Lord, it came to pass that the Lord spoke unto Joshua, the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying: Moses, My servant, is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast." (Josh. 1: 1-4.)

In the plan of divine revelation there is a deep, logical and Christological order of conception and thought; and while, of course, we find at every step the usual freedom and diffuseness of the Oriental style, yet there is one great definite idea that moves steadily onward in clear development and grand progression.

THE BOOKS OF MOSES

The Book of Genesis is the Book of Beginnings, and everything that comes in the later books has, in some sense, its source and foundation here. Exodus is the Book of Redemption, and all that the later Scriptures reveal with respect to the grand plan of human redemption, has here its roots and germs. Leviticus is the Book of Reconciliation, and unfolds the teachings of the Holy Ghost respecting our access to God, and our life in the holy place of His sanctuary. Numbers is the story of the wilderness, and the picture of our wanderings below; and especially of the failure of God's people to enter into their inheritance. Then Deuteronomy comes as the second or new departure of the people of God, after the sad experience of failure and sin, and rehearses afresh God's covenant and His charges to His people, as the second generation look forward to enter into the rest

which their fathers had refused.

JOSHUA.

The culmination of all this is reached in the Book of Joshua. As Numbers is the story of failure, and Deuteronomy of renewed preparation, so Joshua tells us of the actual entering into the land of promise. It marks the highest point in the history of the covenant people hitherto, and necessarily suggests some deeper lessons in its higher spiritual significance as respects the New Testament revelation, and the spiritual people of whom ancient Israel was but the type.

Therefore, we find the Apostle in his letter to the Hebrews saying: "If Joshua had given them rest, then would he not have spoken of another day," -- "there remains, therefore, a rest for the people of God." It is evident, therefore, that Canaan was not designed to be the permanent inheritance of Israel, but a type of the highest heritage of faith and holiness which still remained for God's covenant people.

NOT HEAVEN.

That inheritance cannot be the heaven that awaits us after death, or even the earthly kingdom of glory and righteousness which the coming of Christ is to bring. Our hymnology is laden with this conception and its appropriate phraseology, but it is all contrary to the real idea of the Holy Ghost; for we shall not find in heaven, or even in the millennial state, anything to correspond with the enemies in the land, whom Joshua had to fight, with the years of conflict through which Israel passed, with the shame and sin of Achan, or the subsequent backsliding of Israel. Into that land "shall enter nothing that defiles," and there shall be no foe or fear of conflict; and even Satan, the great leader of all the adverse host, shall be utterly cast out.

The spiritual kingdom must, therefore, be some experience and condition here. What it means, the Apostle very distinctly expresses when he tells us: "He that has entered into his rest has ceased from his own works, even as God did from His"; and yet again, "Let us, therefore, fear, lest a promise having been given us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." God's rest is something here; a condition and experience of spiritual victory, power, and satisfaction which corresponds with the experience of Israel in Canaan; just as the wretched experience of failure and inconstancy so often found in Christians corresponds with the story of the Book of Numbers and the forty years of wandering in the wilderness.

TWO TYPES OF CHRISTIANS.

Even the most superficial observer must have noticed in the records of Christian experience, and the observation of life, that there are two very distinct types of Christians in the world, in every age; one representing an experience of despondency, anxiety, doubt, inconstancy and frequent declension; a life so unsatisfying as to make one question whether it is really worth all it costs; and the other full of confidence, victory, joy, satisfaction, power and stability.

The difference between these two types is more marked than even the experience of conversion; or the contrast between the man of the world and the professing Christian. Those who have passed into this second stage of Christian life have uniformly testified that their second blessing marked a far greater change in their experience than their first.

There has been no period in the history of the church without these two classes of disciples. Even the apostles themselves passed from one stage into the other; and their experience before the coming of the Holy Ghost was the realization of the Book of Numbers, and their subsequent life, after the day of Pentecost, was a repetition of the Book of Joshua. There is not a congregation of Christians on earth today but contains the same two classes; the people who have simply come out of Egypt and are wandering in the wilderness, with a hope of salvation and a measure of grace sufficient to separate them from the world; and, on the other hand, the people who have been filled with the Spirit, and are walking in the light and joy of the Lord.

Taking the lowest view of it, who is there who has not felt the need of something deeper and higher in his Christian life? Who is there who has not wept over his failures and humiliations, and reached out for a purity and the power worthy of the cost and the grandeur of God's great salvation? Who is there who has not felt that there must be something higher than a life of sinning and repenting, and longed to rise above the evil that he hated, and realize the holy aspirations which constantly struggled in his breast?

Sometimes men have grown so weary and dissatisfied that they have thrown up the little religion they

possessed, and said: "If I cannot have something better than this, I will have nothing"; and after years of struggling, have found the full salvation of God, and accepted it and been brought into the full experience of the sanctification of the Holy Ghost. It is the natural instinct of a newborn soul to expect such a life from the beginning, and it is a strange disappointment, when the first fall comes and the soul is overwhelmed with its insufficiency and helplessness, and pours out for the first time the bitter cry, "O! wretched man that I am; who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

We read as early as the 13th chapter of Genesis, that God gave to Abraham a vision of this Land of Promise, long centuries before it was fulfilled; and so God has been giving to us, all our lives, a vision of a larger, richer blessing than we have ever enjoyed. Sometimes we have seen it in the lives of God's saints with whom we have come in contact, and their shining faces have made us hunger for what we did not possess, and wonder why we did not have it too. Sometimes we have seen it in the promises of God, and asked ourselves why we should not realize these great words, if God really meant them. Sometimes the vision has seemed to be a vague outreaching, quite indefinable, and then sometimes the light has grown clearer, and the land has stood out in its great landmarks and headlands, until we understood more definitely what the promise meant, and what the fulness of our inheritance involved. This is the Apostle's prayer for his friends in Ephesus, and it is the prayer of the Spirit for each of us, that "the eyes of our understanding may be enlightened that we may know the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." May God so open our eyes that, as we read these lines, we may understand the meaning of the inheritance of the saints, and the fulness of the blessing of Christ!

VICTORY

The first definite landmark in the inheritance is VICTORY. Canaan meant to ancient Israel, triumph over their enemies, and our first great spiritual need is power to overcome the evil within us, and the evil around us. We are not anywhere promised that we shall be delivered from the conflict, but it is our privilege to be victorious in it.

Sin shall not cease to exist, in this present dispensation, but we may be dead to sin, and claim the mighty promise -- "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law, but under grace." It is the covenant and oath of Jesus that we "being delivered from all our enemies, and the hands of them that hate us, might serve Him without fear, in righteousness and holiness before Him, all the days of our life." Victory over the sin within us, over the self that dominated us; over the temptations that beset us -- this is the promise of Christ; this is the purchase of His blood; this is the sanctification which the Holy Spirit comes to give to every surrendered heart.

"I will put My Spirit within you, and I will cause you to walk within My statutes, and you shall keep My judgments and do them."

REST

Canaan is called "God's REST." Following, as it did, forty years of weary wandering, it was, indeed, a delightful repose. It tells of something in Christian experience which is as precious as it is rare -- deliverance not only from sin and temptation, but from care and fear; the peace that passes all understanding, and garrisons the heart and mind through Christ Jesus; the trust that is careful for nothing; the confidence that casts all care on Him; the perfect peace in which God keeps those whose minds are stayed on Him; the great peace of those who love His law, and nothing shall offend them. Christ had this perfect peace Himself, and His last bequest to His disciples was: "Peace I leave (or bequeath) to you; My peace I give unto you; let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

Greater than to be saved from the ills of earth, is it to be kept from their shadow and their fear. This is the privilege of the heart that fully trusts and wholly yields itself to God. It is the heaven of the soul, and the blood-bought inheritance of all who are willing to enter into the promised land.

REALIZATION

The land of Canaan was to them the realization of many former promises. It made actual to them things which had been only hopes. And so to us, in our Christian life, there is a stage of faith and promise, and there is the experience of full realization and blessed satisfaction. "The law was given by Moses; but grace and reality came by Jesus Christ."

The Holy Spirit is an earnest and a seal; and these figures express most emphatically the deep impress of living

realities in our heart and life. There is for us the actual consciousness of divine things, the personal and intimate knowledge of God; the utter satisfaction of every longing of the soul; love so rooted and grounded that it cannot be moved, and blessings "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." The inheritance, beloved, is for you. God wants to make the things of the Spirit more actual in your life than the things of sense are in the lower world of the material, and to quicken every inward sense until you shall know and see the invisible realities of the world to come with a vividness that the things of earth can never have.

POWER

How men long for power! How weak and ineffectual are the lives of our Christians; how little they tell for God and man! Christ is the Almighty One, and there is no sphere in which His almightiness should be so strongly felt as in the spiritual realm, where the Holy Ghost supremely rules.

The experience of Joshua in Canaan expresses victorious power. It was the march of God, through His people, in continual triumph, until every earthly foe and every material force acknowledged this supremacy. The same power has been embodied in the Lord Jesus Christ, and His almighty Spirit, and it awaits the trust of every fully surrendered heart. "You shall receive power after the Holy Spirit is come upon you; and you shall be witnesses unto Me"; "He that believes on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do."

YOUR OWN INHERITANCE

But there is something higher than all this. The land of promise has a personal meaning for each of us. No man can occupy the whole world, or live in a whole city; there is one spot which each of us calls home. That is a personal location and possession, and expresses our own individual residence. And so there is a sense in which God has a special inheritance for each of His children. God's promises have a meaning for you that they cannot have for me; and God has a plan for you which is distinct and individual.

That plan He is ever unfolding to our faith, as we are able and willing to receive it. This is what David meant when he said, "The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; yes, I have a goodly heritage."

The inheritance of every Christian is the highest will of God for Him. It includes both our internal and our external life and it means for each of us the revelation of Christ in our own heart in all His fulness of grace and power, and the ordering of God's providence in our life, so as to develop us in the highest manner and use us for the greatest good.

All our life long God has been speaking to us about this plan. Some of us remember the distant vision of our childhood, as we knelt in our earliest prayers, and the light of heaven first began to illumine the firmament of our souls, and open them to the thoughts and plans of God. More and more clearly, as we have come into His more immediate presence, has He made plain to us His thought for us, and added promise unto promise. And as He has fulfilled them successively, He has led us on to a larger vision, vaster hopes and bolder advances, and we have begun to walk through the land in all the length and breadth of it.

The measuring lines of this land are the promises of God. Every New Year's eve, every day of special waiting upon Him; every time of renewed dedication; every birthday and every anniversary, has He enlarged these promises and expanded this vision, and every successive year that faith and expectation have been turned to thanksgiving and praise, as we have found His promises fulfilled and His Word proved sure and true.

A LARGER LAND

But for most of us there is a larger land than we have yet realized, and God is speaking to us as He did to Abram of old, saying: "Look, now, from the place where you stand, northward and southward, and eastward and westward, for all the land which you see, to you will I give it and to your seed forever. And I will make your seed as the dust of the earth; so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall your seed also be numbered. Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto you."

And again, He is speaking to some of us in the rich and glorious promises of Deuteronomy 8: 7: "For the Lord your God brings you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of olive oil and honey; a land wherein you will eat bread without scarceness; you will not lack anything in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you may dig brass. When you have eaten and are full, then you will bless

the Lord your God for the good land which He has given you."

What a glorious land this is, with its springs of spiritual refreshing, its fountains from which these springs all come in the indwelling life and presence of God; its ample provision for all your spiritual need; its wheat, barley, fig trees and pomegranates; its bread without scarceness, its honeyed sweetness, its oil and olives, producing in perpetual freshness the anointing of His gladness and His power; the land whose very stones and hills, with their ruggedness and barrenness, are but mines of brass and iron, enabling us to draw strength out of our very difficulties, and blessing from all our trials.

Beloved, there is such a land for you, if you will but enter in and claim all the fulness of this boundless blessing. Nor need we fear to claim all the fulness of this promised land.

Again, in Jeremiah 32: 41, He says: "I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them assuredly in this land with My whole heart and with My whole soul."

This was the Apostle's prayer for the Thessalonians (2 Thes. 1: 11): "Wherefore, also, we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of His goodness, and the work of faith with power." This was the meaning of the prayer of Epaphras in Colossians 4: 12: "That you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God." This was the holy confidence of Paul, "that in nothing shall I be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death." And this was his one desire in life, and the only thing that he counted dear, as expressed in Acts 20: 24, "That I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God."

There is for each of us a ministry, according to the will of God; for each of us a plan for reaching His highest thought for us, and the very best that we can do or be for Him and the world, and to even seem to come short of it will be an everlasting disappointment; and so He calls upon us, "Let us labor to enter into that rest, lest any of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin."

Beloved, there is nothing in life so important as this, and when the close comes, it will be an unending satisfaction to look back and feel that nothing has failed of all the will of God. But what a bitter disappointment it will be to look back from the light of eternity and realize how very much God had intended for us, and that it is forever lost!

Every moment of our life is adding something to this land or taking something from it. How swiftly the shuttle is flying to and fro with every throb of our heart, and threads are being woven and the pattern being worked out or ruined. We cannot do it over again; the issues are hastening near, and they are forever. May God help us that we may not even seem to come short!

ITS BOUNDARIES

In our text the boundaries of Canaan are given in a very striking manner. They were to extend "from the wilderness unto this Lebanon," and "from the great river Euphrates unto the great sea, toward the going down of the sun." The wilderness was its southern limit, and this Lebanon the northern boundary. Joshua was standing at the time on the edge of the wilderness, and Lebanon was far away on the extreme north. It seems very strange to call it "this Lebanon." Humanly speaking, it was "that Lebanon." But Joshua was speaking of it in the language of faith, and faith always overleaps distance, and counts the things that are not as though they were. It was by Abram's faith that he saw the promise afar off and ran to meet it and embrace it. He had such faith in God that he saw the land afar off. Faith brings the distant near, and the far-off things that appear unapproachable, the blessings that seem to be beyond our reach, are made so plain to the eye of faith that they are reckoned ours before they come to pass.

So yonder snow-crowned mountain, lost in the clouds, and dim in the distance of more than a hundred miles, is "this Lebanon." The eye of faith loves to gaze upon the distant heights of promise, and say "this Lebanon." One touch of faith will dissolve the spaces that intervene, and cancel the interval of years, and bring us into God's ever present Now, "where one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day." We may get a foretaste of heaven, and dwell in its light, and sing the joyful song of trust:

"Give me the glorious foretaste here, I pray,
Let faith foredate that everlasting day;
And, walking in its glory all the way,

Oh! lead me in the way everlasting."

There is another beautiful suggestion in the description of the eastern and western boundary. Their line was to extend from the river Euphrates unto the great sea "toward the going down of the sun." It was not to reach the going down of the sun, but to be toward it. In this land the sun never goes down. Away beyond the great sea of God's fulness lies the sunset, but our western boundary never reaches it. It is very striking and beautiful that the last picture in the Book of Joshua is the inheritance of Joshua himself, which was Timnath Serah, which literally means "the city of the sun." So the picture of Canaan begins and ends with a sunlit sky, whose light and glory shall never fade. This is the inheritance where God's children may all abide. "Their sun need no more go down, for God shall be their everlasting light, and the days of their mourning shall be ended." Are we dwelling in this light?

Perhaps we might regard all these places as at least symbols, if not types, of some higher spiritual meaning. Shall we take the wilderness where the survey began as a figure of our life of wandering? Shall we take Lebanon to represent the strength and power of God in the truly consecrated and Christ-filled life, endued with the Holy Ghost and filled with the fulness of God? Shall the river Euphrates represent the rich fruitfulness of which it was a type, and shall the great sea speak to us of the larger fulness of God Himself, unto which all these blessings are intended to lead us?

Such is God's great survey of the Land of Promise. Into it He is waiting to bring His consecrated people. Shall we not listen while He says, in solemn earnestness, to each of our hearts, "Let us, therefore, fear, lest a promise having been left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it."