

Hope Christian Church
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Joshua: A Book of Bright Beginnings

Eight Propositions for Breaking New Ground

Joshua 1:10-18; 22:1-8; Num 32; Heb 11:40; Matt 11:28

Last Week

Topic: A New Trust

Proposition 1: Believe God Can Keep His Promises

We concentrated on the first nine verses of the book of Joshua. The aim of the sermon was demonstrate that God is absolutely faithful and trustworthy. He keeps every promise He makes. He has the power to fulfill every promise His graciously gives. He is faithful and trustworthy in every circumstance of life even in times of death. Bright beginnings are born out of the soil of sad endings.

We're calling this series Bright Beginnings. I have chosen seven passages from Joshua to focus on over the next seven weeks (including this morning). The book of Joshua is about taking new ground, so I have come up with eight propositions for breaking new ground; one proposition for each week. Last week was about a new trust. These are obviously not new insights. We are simply praying that God would apply them here at Hope in a new and fresh way. Proposition one was Believe God Can Keep His Promises.

This Week

Topic: A New Rest

Proposition 2: Move Forward In Unity

Last week was about a new trust; this week is about a new rest and how it will be possessed.

The Lord Will Give You A Place of Rest

Joshua 1:10-18

10 And Joshua commanded the officers of the people, 11 Pass through the midst of the camp and command the people, Prepare your provisions, for within three days you are to pass over this Jordan to go in to take possession of the land that the LORD your God is giving you to possess.

In 1:2 the Lord speaks to Joshua and gives him a command, *"Moses my servant is dead. Now arise, therefore, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to the people of Israel."*

God has given the command to Joshua so he then passes it on to the officers who are over the

people who, in turn, are to go through the whole camp and personally give the command directly to the people.

The word for officer here literally means “scribe” and probably refers to the scribes who had responsibility over certain families in listing them in the genealogies.

Be Prepared To Leave

They are to spread the word that the people are to be prepared to cross over the Jordan in three days to take possession of the land that has been given to them. Joshua is giving them advance notice because it takes time to prepare to move.

The word here for “provisions” or “supplies” refers to food but clearly Joshua has in more in mind than merely a command to “pack a lunch.” God was still providing them manna every day.¹ You couldn’t store up manna or more than a day (Ex 16:17-21). If you tried to keep more than a day’s need, then it stank and turned to worm-rot.

They were about to walk into the land that had been promised. They need to prepare to physically move camp, but I also think there was some mental preparation that needed to happen as well.

Moving From Promise to Possession: Tell Me Again

What they had always heard about was nearly upon them. In the iron furnace of Egyptian slavery, I wonder how many bedtime stories about God’s promises were told as grandparents & parents put the children to bed? I’m sure every single night little exhausted, sun burnt Hebrew children said, “Mommy, tell me the story about Abraham again!”

Tired and weary parents, who at some level may have even doubted their own words, took a deep breath and said, “God promised Abraham to give us a land of our own one day and we will be free?” And as they told the story and remembered all the details of the promise (even the promised delay of Gen 15:13-14), then their own excitement began to grow and perhaps their faith began to return.

Where Are We Going // Are We There Yet

Traveling through the dessert how many times did the little Hebrew children ask “where are we going?” And “Are we there yet?” When you have little children a 40-minute car ride can seem like an eternity. They had been wandering in the dessert for 40 years!!! I cannot imagine how many times the “are we there yet?” question was asked.

The land they had been promised was about to become the land they were going to actually possess. Imagine the thought; be prepared, for God was about to do for them all that they

¹ The manna didn’t cease until after they crossed the Jordan (Joshua 5:12).

have heard since they were children.

Prepare your provisions. Get ready to break camp in three days. The land that God is giving us, we are going over to possess. The land had been given, but they had not taken possession of it yet. Now the time had come. The gracious gift of land promised was about to become a reality.

The Reubenites, the Gadites, & the Half-Tribe of Manasseh

Joshua had given a command to the people in general. Now we turn to a specific command given to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh.

12 And to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh Joshua said, 13 Remember the word that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, saying, The LORD your God is providing you a place of rest and will give you this land. 14 Your wives, your little ones, and your livestock shall remain in the land that Moses gave you beyond the Jordan, but all the men of valor among you shall pass over armed before your brothers and shall help them, 15 until the LORD gives rest to your brothers as he has to you, and they also take possession of the land that the LORD your God is giving them. Then you shall return to the land of your possession and shall possess it, the land that Moses the servant of the LORD gave you beyond the Jordan toward the sunrise.

Remember Moses' Command

Joshua reminds them of Moses' command and their promise. He's reminding them that it's now time for them to keep their word, to keep a promise they had given.

We'll have to back to Numbers 32 & Deuteronomy 3:18-20 to see the full picture of what happened. As Israel traveled from the east through the Plains of Moab when they came to the eastern side of the Jordan River, the Reubenite, the Gadites, and half of Manassah said, this land looks pretty good. They had lots of livestock, flocks, and herds and the land looked like a good place to settle down and feed the flocks. (see Numbers 32 & Deut 3:12-22)

So they came to Moses and said, *"And they said, If we have found favor in your sight, let this land be given to your servants for a possession. Do not take us across the Jordan."* (Num 32:5)

Moses gives them a stinging response. Pay attention to the verses about discouragement.

Numbers 32:6-14

But Moses said to the people of Gad and to the people of Reuben, Shall your brothers go to the war while you sit here? 7 Why will you discourage the heart of the people of Israel from going over into the land that the LORD has given them? 8 Your fathers did this, when I sent them from Kadesh-barnea to see the land. 9 For when they went up to the Valley of Eshcol and saw the land, they discouraged the heart of the people of Israel from going into the land that the LORD had given them. 10 And the LORD's anger was kindled on that day, ... 14 And behold, you have risen in your fathers' place, a brood of sinful men, to increase still more the fierce anger of

the LORD against Israel!

Notice Moses' concern. He mentions it twice. His greatest fear is that this request will discourage the hearts of the rest of Israel and so result in them failing to go in and take the land and that disobedience would bring on more wrath.

Moses' experience had taught him that a discouragement is among the greatest enemies of faith. The last time a discouraging report was brought, the promises of God were forgotten and faith failed. Beware of discouraging your brothers & sisters.

Then the 2.5 tribes "drew near" (Num 32:15) to Moses to explain to him. They said, (the following is my own summary);

"No Moses we will still help. We are not abandoning our brothers or turning away from the Lord. Let us build folds for the herds and safe towns for our families and then all of our mighty men of valor will be the first to cross the Jordan and the first to march into battle. And we will remain with our brothers and fight until each tribe has its own land and only then will we return to our land." (see Num 32:15-27)

Moses' response: "OK. If you do that then I agree."

Deut 3:18-20

Moses said, *The LORD your God has given you this land to possess. All your men of valor shall cross over armed before your brothers, the people of Israel. 19 Only your wives, your little ones, and your livestock (I know that you have much livestock) shall remain in the cities that I have given you, 20 until the LORD gives rest to your brothers, as [He has given] to you, and they also occupy the land that the LORD your God gives them beyond the Jordan. Then each of you may return to his possession which I have given you.*

Moses then told Joshua, Eleazar the priest, and all the elders of the tribes what they had agreed to so the promise could not be conveniently forgotten in the future when it came time to begin the battle (Num 32:28).

The Sweet Promise of Rest

In the middle of all this talk of war and battles is embedded a sweet promise of rest. This is the heart of this passage this morning. At the heart of God's promised land is a promised rest. The land represented rest. But the Reubenites, Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manassah could not rest until all their brothers could rest. They had to fight together before any of them could rest together.

The Example of Uriah

Uriah the Hittite knew this. When David had committed adultery with Uriah's wife and found out she was pregnant, he recalled Uriah from the battle in hope that everyone would think that the baby was legitimate. However, Uriah would not rest when his brothers were in battle.

Uriah didn't sleep at his own house. He slept with the servants of the king just in case there was an urgent call from the king. David would have done well to learn from him. And so would we.

2 Sam 11:11

Uriah said to David, The ark and Israel and Judah dwell in booths, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field. Shall I then go to my house, to eat and to drink and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing.

Uriah wouldn't rest while his brothers were in battle.

Joshua was reminding them of their promise. He was reminding them that they were one nation before they were twelve tribes. The land was theirs but there were enemies to drive out. The fullness of the rest would not come until the battles were complete; until the last enemy had been crushed under foot. Verses 16-18 reveal that they had not forgotten their promise.

Joshua 1:16-18

16 And they answered Joshua, All that you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. 17 Just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you. Only may the LORD your God be with you, as he was with Moses! 18 Whoever rebels against your commandment and disobeys your words, whatever you command him, shall be put to death. Only be strong and courageous.

- We will obey you just like we obeyed Moses
- Whoever disobeys will pay with his life.

Application (personal & corporate)

1. **We need to prepare to move.** If God is at work then He is moving us, stretching us, and molding us. He ever closer into conformity with His image (Rom 8:29).
 - a. We are not fighting for an earthly kingdom.
 - i. John 18:36 *Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world."*
 - b. Prepare individually & corporately.

- i. Individually: Rom 13:11 *You know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. 12 The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. 13 Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.*
 - ii. Corporately in prayer: June 11, 2008 letter re: planting GENESIS. We all need to be in prayer about whether or not it is the will of the Lord for GENESIS to be planted as a new church. Pray earnestly about this.
 - c. How do we fight this battle?
 - i. 2 Cor 10:3 *For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. 4 For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. 5 We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,*
 - ii. Eph 6:10-18 *The armor of God, 18 Praying at all times*
- 2. **Expect a battle.** Anytime we move into new territory there will be a battle. God had repeatedly told the Israelites that the land was theirs but they still had to possess it. They had to go in and fight for it.
 - a. Personally, when you make a decision to be obedient to the Lord, the enemy will always fight you. When you make up your mind to obey the command of Christ, the enemy will always tell you that you can't do it, that you'll be missing out on all the fun, that you're strange and old-fashioned, and that it is better for you to disobey. Obedience will result in a battle between the flesh and the spirit
 - b. Corporately, when we, as a church, decide to obey the Lord and move in a direction that we feel the Lord is leading us, there will be a battle. The enemy will tell us we can't afford it, we're too small, it doesn't make sense to do it this way, or any number of other excuses to disobey. We should expect a battle when our heart's desire is obedience to the Lord.
 - i. The key question is not, does it make sense. The key question is, "Father, is this your will?"
 - ii. God doesn't always operate in ways that make sense to us. His ways are higher than our ways (Is 55:9).

1. It doesn't make sense to expect to conquer a city by quietly marching around its walls, but it was God's will.
2. It doesn't make sense to think that eternal life is secured by the death of one man, but it was the Father's will that Jesus die.

3. Whatever God gives us will be a gift.

- a. The land was a gift. They didn't deserve it (Deut 9:4ff). God simply showered them with grace.
- b. We are all sinners. No one deserves grace. That's the very definition of grace "getting what you don't deserve." What we deserve is God's wrath yet He continues to show His kind hand at work among us.

4. If we are to take new ground we must do it together. We must be unified. Division discourages the heart. Discouragement leads to disobedience.

- a. Eph 4:1-5 *I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.*
- b. Israel was 12 tribes but they were one nation. They went into Egypt 12 brothers and their families. They came out ONE nation. We may be many ministries but we are one church.
- c. The ministries of this church are not twelve tribes competing with another for space. We are brothers & sisters working for the same goal.
- d. What unites us a church? The same things that united the twelve tribes.
 - i. One body – Israel was twelve tribes but one nation. We are one church with many members.
 - ii. One Spirit – each of us has spiritual life because we have been brought here by One Holy Spirit. There are many "varied" gifts, but all given by One Holy Spirit. (1 Cor 12:4)
 - iii. One hope – we are all desiring one thing, to be with Jesus.
 - iv. One Lord – Jesus is the master of us all. We all serve the same Lord.
 - v. One faith – we were all saved by the same means; grace through Jesus given to the undeserving.
 - vi. One Father – we have one God & Father.
- e. We need to begin to think of ourselves as one church rather than many people.

5. **The promised rest is found in a person not a place.** The “Promised Land” has been a land that is the scene of wars and bloodshed² since Joshua crossed the Jordan (except for a few days here & there i.e. the days of Solomon) down to this very day. There is no rest for our souls in Israel or the United States or any other land. There is only rest we will find is in Jesus.
- a. Jesus said, *“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”* (Matt 11:28-30)
 - b. “Come to me” not “DO for me.” He said come to me & I will give you rest. He didn’t say “come to me and I will give you a to do list that will keep your sinful self busy working for me til the day you die.”
 - c. Yes, there are a thousand good & worthy & needful things to do for the kingdom of God, but is there anything about our “doings” that make what we do desirable to those who don’t do them?
 - i. When we go about our daily “doings” does anyone watching say, “Even though you’re busy there seems to be a peaceful rest over you that seems unusual?”
 - d. Where is the rest in your soul? Where is the contentment that flows out of *“my yoke is easy & my burden is light?”* Where is the peace that should pervade our lives God’s chosen children?
 - e. Jesus is the promised rest. It is only after proper rest that we do what is proper. Our souls must rest in Jesus before our bodies can do for Jesus. If our souls are not by faith resting in Jesus, then we will subtly begin to think that it is because of all of our doing that Jesus accepts us rather our faith in what He has already done.

I pray this morning that you are resting in Jesus through faith. I you have no idea what I’m talking about then pray to Jesus right now and ask him for the faith to understand. Trust in Him and run to Him and He will save you. He will forgive you. And if we, as a church, ask Him, He will begin to show us how to live together as brothers and sisters and together strive for one goal, to see many people become committed disciples of Jesus.

² Israel had to fight and destroy the inhabitants of the Promised Land all the days of Joshua, who lived to be 110 (Judges 2:8). After Joshua and the elders died, the children Israel were turned over to “plunderers” due to their unfaithfulness (Jud 2:11-14) thus the fighting continued. There was peace in the days of Solomon but more strife arose as a result of his faithless, unwise son resulting in more battles down to the day when both kingdom in Israel were sacked.