

Possession; Or, The Other Side of Jordan

Pasture for the Flock of God · Joshua 5–6

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before God? Is it on the Egypt side of the Red Sea, or the other? You cannot be happy in the former position. There was no singing in Egypt, though perfect safety; for they were sheltered by the blood of the lamb. But after that, when they arrived at Pihahiroth, perhaps they never had such fear and distress of soul. And yet, if you had asked them, Have you not been under the shelter of the blood? they would have replied, “Yes.” Have you not been brought out of Egypt, and into the wilderness, by the direct power of God? “Yes.” Is not the token of God’s care and presence in the cloudy pillar by day, and the fiery pillar by night, continually with you? “Yes.” Then why this deep, this bitter distress? The inquirer would immediately be directed to Pharaoh and all his hosts, who were so hotly pursuing them, shut in as they were by the Red Sea. Deliverance, they would say, we want; and nothing but a mightier power than any they had ever known could effect it. Oh the misery, the self-occupation, the lack of joy and gladness of those who take their place, though secure no doubt, on Egypt’s side of the Red Sea!

when in Egypt we were met, through the grace of God, by the blood of the Lamb, it is at the Red Sea we have to do with Christ risen out of death, who is our life. And this makes all the difference. Blessed as it is to know the shelter of the blood, it is more blessed to know that we have resurrection life -- a life that lives the other side of death and judgment, an imperishable life, a life that naturally springs upward and onward, a life that has tastes, feelings, joys, and habits suited to God, and cannot rest the sole of her foot in the region of sin and Satan. Of such, too, it is written, When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then ye also shall appear with Him in glory (Col. 3:4).

We may joyfully sing -“O Lord, Thou now art risen! Thy travail now is o’er; For sin Thou once hast suffered -Thou liv’st to die no more! Sin, death, and hell are vanquished By Thee, who’rt now our Head; And, lo! we share Thy triumphs, Thou First-born from the dead.

And, oh, how rich the blessing, when assured by the infallible word of God, and we see the accomplishment in the finished and triumphant work of Jesus through death, of deliverance judicially from the “old man,” from the world, from Satan, and know we have the present possession of eternal life in Christ risen! We praise and give thanks. We rejoice in Christ Jesus our life. We look back upon the Egypt world as a long way off, and as knowing that the waters of death and judgment, which have swallowed up all that was against us, roll between us and it. Thus have we peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; we are consciously objects of divine favor, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. If

“Into Thy death baptized, We own with Thee we died; With Thee, our life, we’re risen, And shall be glorified. From sin, the world, and Satan, We’re ransomed by Thy blood; And here would walk as strangers Alive with Thee to God.”

Possession; Or, The Other Side of Jordan Joshua 5, 6 It was by the power of God that the people of Israel were brought into the land. The only way for them out of Egypt to Canaan was by the blood of the lamb, and by the mighty power of God bringing them through death and judgment, as set forth by the Red Sea, and Jordan. Their feet are now in the land where God's eyes and God's blessings always are. All is of God. They now possess what they had so long desired. They did not hope to be in the land, for they were there, and every inch they stood upon was for their own enjoyment. This is to us like the truth of Ephesians, where we are looked at as now made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ. This is beyond being dead and risen, it is ascension truth -- in Christ, who is in the heavenlies. This is where the grace of God has set every believer. He may not know it, but He is accepted in the beloved, blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, and sitting in heavenly places in Christ. To know this as a divine reality gives true rest of soul. We are

then, as to spiritual life and standing, in Christ in heavenly places, or, according to the type, in the land now. To know it as a doctrine of Scripture is one thing; for our souls so to believe it as to enter into the holiest, inside the rent veil, and thus joyfully possess the good land, so to speak, is quite another thing. But we fall short of the blessings God would have us now embrace, if we do not enter upon, possess, and enjoy this blessed nearness to God now; for He who is ascended into heaven, and sitting on God's right hand, being our life, righteousness, and sanctification, we are alive for ever-more -- righteous as He is righteous, and as near to God as He is, because of the abundant grace and power of God to us-ward in Christ. When consciously near, entering where God has set us, we do not try to get near, and strive to be there, but rejoice that He has set us there. It is all His own doing, by His almighty power, and the exceeding riches of His grace. There is no effort in this; we see Jesus our Lord, our Head, our Life,

our Righteousness, and rejoice that we are in Him there; yea, filled to the full in Him, who is the Head of all principality and power. As we sometimes sing with reverence and joy -- "So near, so very near to God, Nearer I cannot be; For in the person of His Son I am as near as He. "So dear, so very dear to God, More dear I cannot be; The love wherewith He loves His Son, Such is His love to me."

Such is the height to which the grace and power of God in Christ, through His precious blood, have brought us, so that we wait for nothing less than the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body, at the coming of our Lord, It is more than being sheltered by the blood of the Lamb, as Israel in Egypt sets forth; more than deliverance from the power of flesh and Satan, through death and judgment, and having risen life in the wilderness; it is being already in the possession and enjoyment of heavenly places by faith, in spiritual life and power. Every Christian is there; but how few seem to know it! We may say all Christians are in some sense in all three places. As a fact, we are still in this Egypt world, though not of it; as to experience, we are passing through a wilderness, a region which is dry and barren, and can yield nothing for our souls; and as to faith, we are in spiritual life, and standing in Christ Jesus in heavenly places. Only notice in Joshua, that after they entered the land it was not all peace and joy, but, on the contrary, conflict; for they had to fight hard in order to stand where God had brought them, and enjoy what God had given them. And so with us, for we who have entered upon our

present possession in the heavenlies have to wrestle with wicked spirits in heavenly places in order to stand there, and enjoy the blessings given to us of God. And such only, be it observed, know this sharp and terrible conflict -- a conflict not against flesh and blood,

but against wicked spirits in high or heavenly places (Eph. 6:12).

The first thing the children of Israel were enjoined to do, after they had passed through Jordan, carried twelve stones into the land, and set up twelve in the midst of Jordan, to the praise of God, was to make sharp knives {Josh. 5:2},

and to circumcise again the second time. It is an injunction of all importance; for "the flesh" cannot be used in the service of God, cannot be recognized as having any place in the heavenlies. It must be wholly and decidedly renounced. Whether it be the flesh in its moral, intellectual, or religious phases, (alas, how deceitful it is, and desperately wicked!) it must be wholly denied. Its wisdom as well as its righteousness, its ways of refinement as well as of violence and corruption, its iniquity, both ecclesiastical and social, must be entirely set aside -- its claims, its pretensions, its pride, its lusts, in short, the "old man" must be completely "put off." It needs a sharp knife; but it must be done. The attempt to be something in the flesh denies the work of Christ on the cross, and that we have

died with Christ. To set it up in Christians in any form is to undermine the real value of the cross, and sooner or later to lose the present enjoyment of that work in the soul. In short, to reckon ourselves to be living in the flesh, instead of having died with Christ and alive in Him, is to deny that we have either crossed the Red Sea or Jordan, and practically to confess that we are still in Egypt among the "hoppers to be saved," instead of possessing and enjoying our true place and new relationships and privileges as seated in Christ Jesus in heavenly places. Secondly, they celebrated the ground of their deliverance and present blessings in keeping the passover. The passover was never forgotten; it was celebrated in Egypt, in the wilderness, in the land. So with us, it should be and will be had in everlasting remembrance, that the death and bloodshedding of the Lamb of God is the alone foundation of all our blessings. If now we have entered inside the veil, it is by the blood of Jesus. Our title to be there for ever is, that Jesus has entered into heaven itself by His own blood. This is never to be forgotten, for "Our every joy on earth, in heaven, We owe it to His blood."

The passover then was celebrated by them after they entered the land. Now we are told that Christ our passover was sacrificed for us; and do we ever enter into the real purport and value of the Lord's supper, unless we eat it as those who are already in Christ in the heavenlies, and therefore look back upon His death upon the cross? that is, we see Him now crowned with glory and honor, and remember Him as He was in death for us on the cross. We remember Jesus, and show His death till He come. And, seeing that we owe all our present and eternal blessings to the never-ending virtue of His precious blood, how can we ever forget such rich, such abundant mercy, in thus loving us, washing us from our sins in His own blood, and making us kings and priests unto God and His Father? (Josh. 5:10). Thirdly, they feasted; they ate of the old corn of the land (Josh. 5:11).

They were no longer dependent upon the ministry of a daily supply morning by morning, faithful and unfailing as it was; but they now had a continuous unceasing supply always at hand. So, now, souls who are consciously in heavenly places in Christ can feed unceasingly on Him; they enjoy not merely a living Christ who came down to die, but a risen and ascended Christ gone up on high. They feed on a triumphant, glorified Christ -- the true corn of wheat that belongs to heaven. They know the fulness of Christ is theirs. They can now enter into God's thoughts, God's estimate of Him, who raised Him from the dead, and said, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool {see Matt. 22:44; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42; Acts 2:34}.

They see Him crowned with glory and honor. He is the object of their desire, as well as the accomplisher of their eternal salvation. They see in that Man in the glory, in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, the all-worthy One, to

whom angels, and principalities, and powers are made subject. They gaze by faith on Him, are attracted to Him, commanded by Him, satisfied with Him, rejoice in Him -- their strength, their sufficiency, their righteousness, their glory. They find Him enough to fill their hearts and minds; and so ardently do they long for unbroken fellowship with Him, that the fervent utterance of their hearts is -- "O fix our earnest gaze So wholly, Lord, on Thee, That with Thy beauty occupied, We elsewhere none may see!"

They feed, then, upon "the old corn of the land," the fulness of an ever-living, ever-loving Savior in the glory. It is on Christ Himself they now feast, and draw their strength and comfort in blessed consciousness that they are in Him who is their everlasting life and righteousness. Fourthly, this life of faith qualifies us for the fight of faith. Feasting first, then fighting. This is the divine order; and for this the captain of the Lord of hosts appears as their strength. They had to take possession of what God had given them, and all on which the sole of their foot rested, and only so much could they enjoy. Conflict, then, sharp conflict with the enemies in the land, was before them, and it would have been overwhelming did they not know that the Lord of hosts was with them. Joshua, when near Jericho, lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man with a drawn sword in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come.

This was a most affecting reply to Joshua; for he fell on his face and worshiped, and said, What saith my lord unto his servant? And the captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And he did so {see Josh. 5:13-15}.

And what is this but the Lord appearing to His servant as the Commander and strength of His people? How forcibly it reminds us of the divine injunction by the apostle: Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might {Eph. 6:10}.

And besides these points, do we not see what exercise of soul we need in order to fully place ourselves in the hands of the Lord, and realize that He is for us and with us? Thus we should encourage ourselves in Him, and lean not on fleshly energy, but on His almighty arm, and faithfulness and love. It

cannot, I believe, be too strongly impressed upon our souls, that we need divine energy to take possession of, and to enjoy our blessings in heavenly places in Christ -- that Satan's chief aim is to keep us from being inside the veil, the true ground of worship and communion, and the true power for all service. Severed from Christ, we are perfect weakness; we can do nothing. Abiding in Him, we can do all things through His strength; so that to be "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might," we must have to do with the Lord Himself, as those who reckon ourselves to have died indeed unto sin, and to be

alive unto God in our Lord Jesus Christ {see Rom. 6:11}.

Then we look to the Lord for all, trust in Him about all, see Him in all, and lean on Him concerning all. True Christian life is, therefore, living a life of faith upon the Son of God, abiding in Him, having all our resources in Him. Then, like in Israel's history, the victory will be ours; and when fleshly confidence is relied on, instead of the strength of the Lord, we shall bitterly feel that the enemy will triumph. May we know, beloved, day by day, more the constant practical reality of being strong in the Lord; for it is written, Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee {Psa. 84:5}. "Though numerous hosts of mighty foes, Though earth and hell our way oppose, He safely leads His saints along: His loving-kindness, oh how strong!"

Thus far we have considered the enjoyment and exercise of soul Godward in those who had crossed the dried-up Jordan and taken possession of the land. Of necessity their feelings and experiences are different from what they were in Egypt, or in the wilderness. But having traced a little their exercises and ways Godward in the fifth chapter, let us now look at their ways manward as set forth in the sixth chapter. Firstly, notice the distinct place of separation they necessarily took before men, because of their having been separated unto God. The two will doubtless always go together, for the sense of nearness to God will throw us off from that which we know to be contrary to God. They were outside the Jericho-world, for it was doomed; it was exposed to judgment, and only waited for the time of execution. This the men of Jericho did not believe; but it did not alter the fact, any more than people saying the world is getting better does not alter the verdict passed upon it -Now is the judgment of this world {John 12:31}.

But, observe, this is not all; they were outside with the ark -type of Christ. A Pharisee or a monk can separate himself from society; but to look at this world as a great system reared up by men and Satan, and see people too (unbelievers) exposed to the judgment of God, having rejected Christ, and to take a place with Christ, outside of it politically, religiously, socially, is the true path. It is because we are in Christ up there, and for ever united to Him by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, that we are necessarily linked with Christ down here, and that must be in separation from the world, for they have rejected Him, and still reject. The answer was, and still is, We will not have this man to reign over us {Luke 19:14}.

No marvel, therefore, that the Holy Ghost enjoins us, when speaking of unbelievers, to come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive

you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty (2 Cor. 6:17, 18).

Secondly, they took the place of obedience. And how can it be otherwise with us, if we realize the fact that we are united to Him in the heavenlies? When Paul, going up to Damascus, unexpectedly caught a sight of Jesus in the glory, and heard from His own precious lips,

Why persecutest thou ME,

was not the immediate response of His deeply-moved heart, Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? {Acts 9:4-6}

for he surely felt at once, that nothing less than full surrender to the Lord's claims would be consistent with the exceeding grace that He had manifested. If we then are really conscious of our nothingness in the flesh, as having died with Christ, and enter into and possess the blessing and enjoyment of being one with Him who is in the glory, how can we have lower thoughts than that "Love so amazing, so divine, Demands our soul, our life, our all"?

All this is beautifully set forth in the charming picture we are contemplating. It is a divinely-illustrated scene. The people now standing on the promised land, now enjoying the long-promised, long-looked-for region flowing with milk and honey, having feasted on the old corn, and conscious of the captain of the Lord's host being with them, they surrender themselves entirely to the appointed guidance, and take the place of obedience so plainly marked out for them, whether to walk or rest, to be quiet or to shout, to sound the horn or not, according to the word of the Lord. And this proved to be the path of blessing. Their testimony was simply owning the Lord, hearkening to His word, doing His will, though it were to manifest to the people of Jericho a spectacle of weakness and folly. But if the priests made a long blast with "rams' horns," and for six days all the men of war compassed the city once each day with them and the ark, and on the seventh day seven times, it was according to the word of the Lord; and what could be a truer testimony? If they neither shouted, nor made any noise with their voice, neither let any word proceed out of their mouth, until Joshua bade them shout, according to the word of the Lord, it was in obedience to the will of the Lord. We know what success followed. And surely the path of obedience must always be with us the path of blessing. We are sanctified unto obedience. We realize the presence of the Lord with us only in the path of obedience. To speak of union with Christ in the heavens, and our present blessings and standing in Him, while our hearts are unexercised as to obedience to the Lord in our present circumstances, is only to show that we traffic in high-flown doctrines, and know little of their true meaning in our souls. Or, it may betray the solemn fact that the natural mind has been amusing itself with an intellectual gratification on the doctrines of Scripture, without the heart in any way grasping their precious heaven-born, unfathomable, eternal realities. The great proof of love to our Lord Jesus Christ now is, that we keep His commandments, prize His sayings, and treasure up His words; and to such, and to such alone, He has promised to manifest Himself, and make them know that He and the Father have taken up their abode with them. Precious, profoundly precious realities for our enjoyment! and suited surely to such as have been

rescued from this present evil age, who have died with Christ, and now live in Him, and who are characterized as not walking after the flesh, but after the Spirit. It is this entire consecration to the will of the Lord, which is so needed in these times of laxity and carelessness -- whole-hearted dedication to Him, full

surrender to His never-failing guidance, and the paramount authority of His holy word at all cost. Such hearts can truly sing "While here, to do His will be mine, And His to fix my time of rest."

Thirdly, let us look at their service. What was it? Was it to do what they could to improve Jericho? Was it to endeavor to elevate the masses of the inhabitants of this strongly-fortified and well-built city? Was it to tell them that the world was getting better? Certainly not; for none of these things would be true. But it was to save sinners out of this already doomed city. God's testimony had gone out against it. The city, the king, and all the men of valor were given to Joshua for destruction; but there were some to be saved out of it -- some who would not come into judgment, and the faithful servants of God were intent on saving them. A harlot among them there was; but she was a woman of faith, had shown it by favoring the people of God, and openly confessed her faith by putting the scarlet line in the window. Little could the wise and mighty men of this famous city suspect for a moment what the scarlet line meant, even if they had seen it. Not so, however, with God's people. For when the wall had fallen down flat, the city was taken, and the process of utter destruction was about to begin, at Joshua's command the young men that were spies went in, and brought out Rahab, and her father, and her mother, and her brethren, and all that she had; and they brought out all her kindred, and left them without the camp of Israel {Josh. 6:23}.

And they burnt the city with fire. We are told that Joshua saved Rahab the harlot alive, and her father's household, and all that she had, . . . because she hid the messengers which Joshua sent to spy out Jericho {Josh. 6:25},

at whose command she had bound the "scarlet line" in the window. (See Josh. 2:18; 6:22-25.) And does not this exquisite picture again read a further lesson of precious instruction to us? For if the world through which we are passing is under condemnation, if Jesus meant what He said when He uttered the solemn verdict, Now is the judgment of this world {John 12:31},

and if there be not one line of Scripture enjoining us to improve it, what is our position toward it, but as separated ones by the grace of God to minister to souls, and seek to bring them out? to do good to people in it, and expect no good thing from it? Hence the Holy Spirit pointedly marks out the faithful servants of the Lord Jesus as those who went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles for His name's sake {see 3 John 7}.

And surely, if our place now is oneness with Christ in the heavenlies, what can our position here be but separation unto the Lord in fellowship with every member of His body (the only membership in the New Testament), as those who warn men of their danger, and seek to save believing Rahabs? Thus God's way has been, and still is, in judgment to remember mercy. And how blessed this service is to

“Call them in” -- the Jew, the Gentile; Bid the stranger to the feast; Call them in -- the rich, the noble, From the highest to the least. Forth the Father runs to meet them, He hath all their sorrows seen; Robe, and ring, and royal sandals, Wait the lost ones -- “call them in,”

But here is also a solemn word of warning against lust and covetousness; for we are beset with snares on every hand. One of those who had professed faithfulness to God saw a Babylonish garment and a wedge of gold, and coveted them. Accordingly, he took them, and hid them in his house; but God saw him, and His judgment fell heavily in consequence. And the common baits of Satan to professing Christians now we all know to be love of dress -the Babylonish garment,

and the possession of wealth -the wedge of gold {Josh. 7:21}.

And it is very remarkable that corrupted Christianity, the Babylon of the Apocalypse, is likened to a woman arrayed in purple and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls. Joshua warned the people to keep themselves from the accursed thing, lest they made themselves accursed; but Achan heeded it not, and by his sin brought misery and defeat upon all the people, as well as swift destruction upon himself. May the Lord graciously keep us true to Himself in heart and purpose, and from loving the world, or the things of the world. But, for this, we need to have our souls happily occupied with Him who loved us, and gave Himself for us. And now, beloved fellow-Christians, let us see how far we have entered into this place and character of blessing and testimony into which God has so mercifully brought us. Do we habitually take our place before God as those who are already brought nigh to Him in Christ Jesus in heavenly places? Are we struggling to get near through the workings of a spirit of bondage and unbelief? or do we bless and praise God that our old man was crucified with Christ {see Rom. 6:6},

and that we are a new creation, and have life, standing, righteousness, and nearness to God in Christ ascended? We have it, I say; for God has given it to us; He has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Blessed rest for our souls! solid and abiding peace too! Well, being then in all the acceptance of Christ Himself, in whom we are made accepted, do we know what it is practically to put a sharp knife to “the flesh,” and to rejoice in Christ Jesus, in the precious remembrance of His body given and His blood shed for us? Do we know what it is in God’s presence, in the holiest of all, to feast on an ever-living, ever-loving Christ -- “the old corn of the land”? and, having feasted, do we realize strength to fight against Satan and his hosts for the possession of those heavenly blessings which God has given us in Christ now to enjoy? And, as to our position here before men, do we maintain the place of separation with Christ as not of the world, because it is doomed to judgment? And do we seek to tread the path of obedience, and bear the testimony of the Lord, whatever reproach and censure it may bring upon

us? Do we labor to bring souls out of it, by the power of the precious blood of Jesus, the true “scarlet line”? And do we steadfastly decline the fashionable and costly attire, and the will-be-rich spirit of this present age? These are solemn, allimportant questions for our consciences, beloved fellowChristians, on which our present joy or sorrow, as well as the glory or dishonor of the Lord, hang.

May we unhesitatingly grasp and delight in our present blessings, in the spirit of communion and worship, in Christ inside the veil, and know them as deep and unfading realities, so that we may be found in the true place of separation and faithfulness before men as to bring praise and glory to God.