

Jesus our Joshua (3)

Rest from the Enemy. Joshua 1:10-15.

***'The Lord your God has given you rest.'* Joshua 1:13.**

***'Take my yoke upon you-----and you will find rest for your souls'*. Matt. 11:29**

The familiar song says, *'We are pilgrims on a journey.'* The big picture of God's sovereign purpose and a progressive revelation brings a fuller perspective into view. By the time of the New Testament, the age of Old Testament military warfare is passing, and Christians are recognising warfare as a real underlying spiritual battle.

The Land of Canaan and its people had belonged to God but for 400 years they had rebelled against God. God had been patient and long-suffering. He had provided for them, but they refused to turn back to him. We should not pass over this part of history quickly because it illustrates the severe consequences of national spiritual rebellion. (See Genesis 15:13-19, Exodus 1:15, 23:20-33, Leviticus 18:24-36)

Today there is a similar rebellion and war being waged against Western culture which is essentially against Christianity. The 'culture warriors' of secularism are attacking Biblical foundations in the name of reason, progress and human rights. This crusade is widely regarded as essential for the betterment of humanity. Religion is portrayed as a sort of mumbo-jumbo and backward way of thinking. Sadly, like the Canaanites estranged from God we all bare the marks of being casualties of a **moral-spiritual flaw** that sets itself against God. The irony is that amid high humanitarian ideals our humanity is seriously flawed so that our very nature rebels and rejects God. (Rom 3:23) We have come to think that individual freedom from constraint and from God is the high point of a *social-political evolution* and that that these trumps everything else.

It was a consciousness that **victory belonged to God** and that victory could be granted by God that inspired Joshua. This inspired the confidence of Israel on the edge of the Promised Land. Today, as we face opposition it is Jesus who calls us to trust and believe in order to experience a *quiet peace confidence*, -- a true inner rest.

The New Testament documents how the powers of the world were arrayed against Jesus just as they were against Joshua. Facing that darkness, Jesus, even on the edge of that drama that began in Gethsemane was enveloped by violence and the destructive power of death that ended with a Roman cross. In an act of redemptive love Jesus death and resurrection confronted the powers of evil. Those powers were consumed and cast aside for ever in that dark, but decisive victory and triumph on a Roman cross.

In his power and goodness God turns even his enemies into his children through the cross. In the person of Jesus, we have a Joshua who has gone before us and who has dealt with the enemy in order to give us a new life-relationship with God. Today, God's promises 'rest' from the violence and the destruction of the enemy arrayed against his people. For a fullness of life, it is still announced, "The Lord God is giving you rest." v13. In Joshua chapter one the command was, "***Go in to possess the land which the Lord your God gives you to possess.***" v11.

It was Augustine of Hippo who said, *“Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord and our heart is restless until it finds its rest I Thee.”*

In many ways today Christians face a formidable world, but they are not to settle on the margins of Jordan. Amid turmoil, intimidation and the stress of the secular world God’s people can know a quiet assurance and a deep inner rest.

Jesus said, *“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.”*
John 14: 27

One day, just as God promised Israel, when the victory at the heart of the universe will be outworked, God will bring *total fulfilment* and give his people *complete rest*. We will live with Him forever in a new heaven and new earth. That is exactly what the Promised Land of Canaan pointed towards and what every Christian can anticipate. Matt,11:28-30, 26-28. Rev,21:1-7.

Reflection:

(1) Can you think of promises in the New Testament that invite us to *‘go in and possess’ the rich promises of Christ’s victory*. Rest from the pressures of others, rest from an accusing conscience. Make a combined list of verses that are clear promises. Claim them personally or as a group as the assurance of the new standing and the enduring relationship you share with our Father-God.

(2) While we are not to live in an unreal, make-believe world with our head in the clouds. How often do we claim the peace of Christ over the troubles that can easily beset us? Suggest helpful ways of doing this.

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