

Place: Lurgan Baptist: 11:4:2006

Reading: Deuteronomy 34:1-12

## FROM EGYPT TO CANAAN

### 15. ON THE BORDERS OF CANAAN

The last stage of the wilderness journey has been travelled, and now the pilgrim hosts come within sight of the land of promise. Canaan, the land of their inheritance spreads itself out before them, in all its richness and beauty. Eyes which have long been accustomed to the dreary solitude of the desert, now gaze upon the vine clad hills and the fertile valleys of the promised land. How that glorious sight must have stirred the hearts of these pilgrim people. Now as we come to our last study in this series entitled, “**From Egypt to Canaan,**” we see Israel “**On the Borders of Canaan.**” As we study carefully the closing chapter of Deuteronomy and the opening chapter of Joshua I want you to,

#### 1. See the Geographical Setting:

Look if you will at ( Deut 34:1 ) Pisgah probably refers to a ridge that extended from the summit of Mount Nebo. Nebo is a part of the Abarim mountain range which lies east of the Dead Sea. This mountain rises to a height of 4500 feet, making it the highest in the entire range. From this vantage point God showed Moses all of the promised land. ( 34:1-3 ) (1)

#### (2) Read the Historical Record:

“*So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab according to word of the Lord.*” ( 34:5 ) Again, this was God fulfilling His word to Moses ( 32:48-50 ) for although he was not allowed to enter the land, he was given the joy of seeing the land. ( 3:24 ) We are told in the day of his death Moses went up. For the believer today, death is like that, it is a departing to be with Christ which is far better. *For Moses also, that was the day when faith gave way to sight. “And the Lord showed him all the land of Gilead, unto Dan, and all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim, and all the land of Judah, unto the utmost sea.”* ( 34:1-2 ) For forty years Moses had seen the land, but only by the eye of faith, and through a glass darkly, now he saw it as it really was. In just the same way, the Christian finds that in death the veil is lifted and he is face to face with Christ his Saviour.

***“ Only faintly now I see Him  
With the darkling veil between  
But a blessed day is coming  
When His glory shall be seen.”***

Moses was 120 years of age when he died, yet he did not die of old age. Not did he die of ill

health, for his eye was not dim, not his natural force abated. Indeed Scripture tells us that he died according to the Word of the Lord. ( 34:5 ) *Believers have always found great comfort in the knowledge that their times are in God's hand.* The record of Moses life and death is a wonderful confirmation of that conviction. His ministry was over  
“ *So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab.* ” ( 34:5 )

“ *And no man knows that sepulchre  
For no man saw it ere  
T' was the angel of God, upturned the sod  
And laid the dead man there.* ”

### (3) Feel the Emotional Atmosphere:

Look if you will at ( 34:8 ) Although they had bickered with him often, they continued to feel a deep love for him. After all, he constantly revealed his devotion to them, by serving them unselfishly in the exodus and during the wilderness wanderings. So when he died, they wept for him. In a month they stopped weeping, but they never ceased remembering. (1) (2) (3)

### (4) Hear the Spiritual Obituary:

Look at ( 34:10 ) That's some obituary is it not ? Have you ever gone to the cemetery and looked at the headstones ? I mean when you die, what would you like people to remember about you ? If it was left to others to compose the inscription on your tombstone, what would they write ? How do you want to be remembered ? What words would you like to appear on your tombstone ? My .... these are tough questions to answer, because they force us to reflect seriously on our lives and deal honestly with our goals and priorities ! As we see, the servant of the Lord, walking up the mountain, never to return to the children of Israel, we discover that,

#### (a) The Secret of Fulfilment in Life is Involvement:

Moses, never retired from serving people, and learning God's Word. He stayed in touch with those things, which are everlasting. ***This gave his life length.*** Do you want a fulfilling, satisfied life ? Get involved, don't withdraw.

#### (b) The Secret of Reality in Life is Humility:

For what a selfless man Moses was ! He never became enthralled with his own track record. ***This gave his life breadth.*** Do you want a real life ? Then seek to exalt others, not yourself !

#### (c) The Secret of Happiness in life is Perspective:

For although this servant of God, faced many situations that could have brought on the feeling of despair, he rarely fell prey to those traps, rather he turned to the Lord, and drew his strength from God's unlimited resources. ***This gave his life depth.*** Do you want a happy life ? Well,

then look at life from God's perspective and gave your burdens to Him. So here then were Israel on the borders of the Promised Land, and as they stood "***On the Borders of Canaan,***" I want you to notice,

## (1) THE LORD HAD TO BE RECOGNISED

For it was the Lord who had brought them thus far. Indeed in the earlier chapters Moses said, "*He brought us out from hence, that He might bring us in, to give us the land which He swore unto our fathers.*" ( 6:23 ) It was God who "*found Israel in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness, he led Him about, He instructed Him, He kept Him as the apple of His eye.*"

( 32:10 ) My .... can you visualise the scene ? Moses is about to take leave of His people ( 34:6 ) the people are about to take leave of the desert. What lies ahead ? Well, there was a new land they had to enter, there were new enemies they had to face, new obstacles they had to surmount, there were new dangers they had to recognise, there were new problems they had to solve, and there were new trails they had to conquer ! Who was sufficient for these things ? ( 2 Cor 2:16 ) God was !

" *My memory is nearly gone,*" wrote John Newton at the age of eighty two, "*but I remember two things, that I am a great sinner, and that Christ is a great Saviour.*" You see, that's the purpose Moses had in mind when he delivered the addresses we call the Book of Deuteronomy, he wanted the people to remember the things that were really important. If they would remember who they were .... sinners saved by God's grace and power .... and what God had done for them, they would be able to enter the new land triumphantly, defeat their enemies, avoid the dangerous temptations all around them, and enjoy the inheritance God had prepared for them. So Moses says to them in this Book,

" *remember the Lord,*" ( 8:18 ) You see, each law, each ceremony, each prohibition, and each memory of past events, pointed to Jehovah the God of the Israelites. In mighty deeds of power and gracious words of truth, the Lord had revealed Himself to Israel, as He did to no other nation, and Moses recorded these words and deeds for us to read today. The knowledge of God is life's most important knowledge. (1) And what a portraiture of the Lord Moses leaves the nation with ! For here in these chapters he speaks about,

### (a) A God who goes **BEFORE** us:

Look if you will at ( 31:1-8 ) Now remember these were the closing words of Moses, and last words are always invested with a special significance. Here he reminds them of a God who goes before them. Does that not remind you of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm ? "*He leadeth me beside the still waters, He restoreth my soul, He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness.*" Do you recall what is said of the shepherd in John's gospel ? "*He calleth his own sheep by name and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep he goeth before them.*"

( Jn 10:3-4 ) In other words, the shepherd is always in the lead, for while in the west they drive the sheep, in the east, they lead the sheep. I love that story of the visitor to Palestine some years ago, who on noticing a shepherd driving his flock, said to him, "*but I thought shepherds here*

*always lead their flock.*” To which the man replied,  
“ *bless you, I am not a shepherd, I am a butcher.*” My .... the Lord is always ahead, out of front, preparing the way, meeting the emergency, guiding the flock. How thankful we ought to be for the preparatory ministry of our Lord. “ *The Lord He it is that doth go before thee.*”

**(b) A God who walks *BESIDE* us:**

“ *And the Lord, He it is that doth go before thee, He will be with thee.*” ( 31:8 ) Does God’s presence not mean everything to the believer ? Indeed, Moses can go so far as to say, “ *If Thy presence go not with me carry us not up hence.*” ( 33:18 ) While Joshua, was encouraged with the assurance, “ *As I was with Moses so I will be with thee.*” ( 1:5 ) And since that is true, we may ready to face anything, to go anywhere, to pay any cost ! My .... are you living in the shadow of some great disappointment ? Some physical handicap, some business problem, some personal dilemma. Well, the Lord is with you. Indeed, “ *He hath said I will never leave thee, not forsake thee.*” ( Heb 13:6 )

***“ I fear not foe with thee at hand to bless  
Ills have no weight and tears no bitterness  
Where is death’s sting, where grave thy victory  
I triumph still if Thou abide with me.”***

**(c) A God who is *BENEATH* us:**

For Moses in his farewell says, “ *the eternal God is thy refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms.*” ( 33:27 ) My .... are you afraid to rest where the universe rests ? Are not your Father’s arms a sufficient pillow for you ? I heard about a mother eagle who had built her nest on a ledge of rock, that jutted out over a steep and dangerous precipice. One day she laid four eggs, and she and her mate sat on them until they hatched. Then began the task of feeding. Both parents were involved in the endless search for field mice, and the like to fill four beaks which never seemed satisfied. Some days later returning to her nest, the mother was startled. Clinging to the edge of the rock with all its might was one of her babies, below it a fall of more than a 1,000 feet. *It could not fly yet and if it let go its body would be crushed by the 1,000 foot drop.* Screaming the mother flew towards her offspring, but as she flew the baby’s strength ran out, and it fell from the ledge. As it fell the mother swooped low, beneath the jutting rock, her strong wings spread wide to break the baby’s fall, and then she caught it in her talons and glided with her little one safely back to its nest. Is that not a picture of how the Lord deals with us ? Those everlasting arms that brought us out of bondage, are able to bear us up in the trials of life ! ***Do you see, that God surrounds us, His people on all sides ?*** Where is God ? *He is Above us,* “ *for there is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help,*” ( 33:26 ) Where is God ? *He is Around us,* for “ *the eternal God is thy refuge,*” ( 33:27 ) Where is God ? *He is Before us,* for “ *He shall thrust out the enemy from before thee.*” ( 33:27 ) Where is God ? *He is Beneath us,* “ *And underneath are the everlasting arms.*” ( 33:27 ) And my .... “ *this God is our God for ever and ever, He will be our guide even unto death.*” ( Ps 48:14 ) (1)

## (2) THE LAND HAD TO REACHED

Like a clap of thunder God announced, “ *Moses my servant is dead.* ” ( Jos 1:2 ) What a daunting prospect these words would conjure up in Joshua’s mind. No longer could he lean on his old mentor. He was left with God alone. And who could step into the shoes of a man of such massive stature and personality ? You know, when some outstanding Christian leader dies, it always seems that they are irreplaceable, but time soon proves in the most humbling fashion that no man is indispensable to the purposes of God ? God is not dependant on one human instrument, however gifted or great he may be.

*God buries His workmen but His work goes on unhindered by any change of personnel.* So God says to Joshua, “ *Moses my servant is ..... unto Moses.* ” ( 1:2-3 ) You see, the land was theirs by divine gift. Canaan was a sovereign and free gift that the Lord gave unto Israel. ( Gen 17:8 ) But what God gave they had to appropriate ! So the Lord says, “ *Arise, go over this Jordan .....*,” in other words, they had to appropriate what was already theirs, they had to go in and possess their possessions. ( Obadiah v 17 ) Is it not the same with us ? The gift of Canaan meant for Israel, the gift of all it contained. The gift of Christ means for us all that He is and all that He has. ( Col 2:9-10 Eph 3:8 ) But faith must definitely appropriate what grace so freely provides. Here is man who possesses a valuable library. Intellectual treasures are within his reach, but he fails to read and study these books. He fails to appropriate the treasures that are at his fingertips, and therefore he remains ignorant.

In just the same way there are treasures in Christ, that are limitless and boundless, but we will only enjoy them in so far as we appropriate them and make them our own. My .... do we know what it is to possess our possessions ? To appropriate the blessings that are already ours in Christ ? Or do we have to confess “ *there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed.* ” ( 13:1 )

The Land had to be Reached. That meant there was,

### **(a) THE PROSPECT OF HUMAN DIFFICULTY:**

“ *Arise, go over this Jordan .....*,” ( 1:2 ) Think of what this meant,

#### 1. TECHNOLOGICALLY:

You see, no longer were the Israelites, a wandering people, they were about to cross Jordan, conquer Canaan, divide their possessions, and carve homes and cities out of that landscape. And though, not as developed as we are today, Joshua had to do a bit of thinking. Now remember, Moses was trained in the universities of Egypt. He had built great cities, he had left tremendous conquests, but Moses was dead. Joshua did not have the experience of Moses, and here he was entering an unknown land that had to be developed technologically.

#### 2. ECONOMICALLY:

I mean this colossal crowd, possibly two and a half million people had to be fed. Prior to this time, quails had been provided for meat, manna for bread, water out of the rock to drink .... but would the quails appear again ? Would the manna fall from heaven ? How would the population be fed as Israel reached Canaan ?

### 3. SOCIOLOGICALLY:

I mean was Joshua not confronted with an enormous problem ? He was about to go into the land and hammer out all the social problems, the dividing of the land, the settling of civil rights, the rule of justice.

### 4. MILITARISTICALLY:

You see, Joshua was facing one of the most gigantic adventures and wars in the history of the Bible. Seven nations were across that Jordan and every one of them had to be conquered. Jericho had to be razed, later Ai, and other cities had to be subdued. Joshua had to lead the people of God into battle to lead over the land.

*“ Arise go over this Jordan. ”*

### 5. SPIRITUALLY:

For Joshua had to direct God’s people in a spiritual path and keep them from idolatry. ( 24:20 ) Yes, there was the prospect of human difficulty. My .... no thoughtful person can question the grim situation that we face in our contemporary world. The *Economist* is worried about recession and loss of jobs. The *Educationalist* has to admit that with all the advance of knowledge in recent years man is inherently and morally unchanged. The *Ecumenist* has had to admit that the mixing of faiths has provided no grounds for unity or victory in a religious world of confusion. My .... internationally things are getting not better, and the only way we can look is heavenward and Godward for ever against the (a) there stands,

### **(b) THE PROMISE OF DIVINE SUFFICIENCY:**

*“ Joshua I know all that you’re facing technologically, economically, socially, militaristically, spiritually, but Joshua I will not fail thee nor forsake thee. ”* ( 1:5 ) Someone said, ***“ the will of God will never lead us where the grace of God cannot keep us. ”*** Paul said,

*“ Our sufficiency is of God. ”* ( 2 Cor 3:5 ) Do you know what that means ? Simply this, our competence comes from God, our enabling to live the Christian life comes from the Lord. My .... on this last Bible study, which may be the last for some of us, can I encourage your heart.

### 1. God will not fail you SPIRITUALLY:

Whatever service you’re engaged in, whatever business you seek to do for Him, God is sufficient. As you contemplate the task that lies before you, are you asking,

*“ how will I cope with that S.S. class ? What will I teach those young folk ? How will I fulfil my responsibility as an elder or deacon ? ”* Do you know what the answer

is ? God will not fail thee.

### 2. God will not fail you MATERIALLY:

This is all of our concern at times. Do you recall the Lord's teaching about the birds of the air and the lilies of the field ? The Saviour tells us that worry is needless and useless. Why ? Because we have a loving Father who is all powerful and all loving and who knows what we need and is able to meet that need. ( Matt 6: 28-30 ) My .... God is saying to you this, "*I will not fail thee.*"

### 3. God will not fail you PHYSICALLY:

Some of you have known illness. Some of you have prayed and the Lord has responded to your requests. ( Phil 2:27 ) Others have prayed and there has been no change but a continuing deterioration. Yet despite all of this, the Lord does make provision for us. The Christian faith does not guarantee physical safety or physical health despite what some well meaning believers say. What it does guarantee is abundant grace, and what is grace. It's God's provision for your need when you need it. "*I will not fail thee.*" 1, 2, 3,

### 4. God will not fail you EMOTIONALLY:

Who among us has never been depressed or despondent ? Even to the extent of thinking that life with all its pressures is not worthwhile and that death would be a happy alternative ? My .... Paul had difficulties that were incredible. ( 2 Cor 4:8-9 ) And yet he says, "*Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.*" ( 2 Cor 4:16 ) Do you renew the inner man daily ? I don't what human difficulty you're facing this .... but there is the promise of divine sufficiency. "*I will not fail thee.*" Now, here were Israel standing on the borders of Canaan, and (1) (2)

## **(3) THE LAW HAD TO BE RESPECTED**

Do you see God's word to Joshua ? ( 1:8 ) Alexander Naismith tells that one of his sons, attending a school on the mainland for the very first time, came home saying that he was to write a short essay on "*My Greatest Treasure.*" Naismith wondered what his small son would choose to write about. When he saw the finished composition, he was delighted that the first sentence was, "*My greatest treasure is my Holy Bible.*" What was Joshua to do with this book ? He was to,

### **(a) LOOK IT UP:**

"*This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth.*" ( 1:8 ) What does that mean ? It means feed on it. Let it be food for your souls. Eat and enjoy it for it's the only food that will sustain your spiritual life. Here there is milk for babies ( 1 Pet 2:2 ) and meat for adults ( 1 Cor 3:3 ) and food for all. Indeed did you notice the word "*all,*" in the context ? There are

some Christians who only want part of this book, they're only interested if it's a word of comfort, encouragement, or prophecy. But we must not forget that "*all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*" ( 2 Tim 3:16 ) One time Charles Hadden Spurgeon was in Scotland, and he came across an old much worn Bible. As he held it reverently in his hand, turning it first one way, and then another, he noticed a small hole where a worm had eaten its way from cover to cover. He saw a parallel that so excited him that he exclaimed, "*Lord, make me a book worm like that from Genesis to Revelation it has gone clear through the Bible.*" But you say, "*there are parts of the Bible I don't understand.*" My .... do you understand all about the food you eat ? Of course you don't but you eat and derive benefit from it. (a)

**(b) LET IT IN:**

"*Thou shalt meditate .... day and night.*" ( 1:8 ) the word "*meditate,*" means "*to digest, to masticate.*" It comes from the Hebrew thought of chewing the cud. Like a cow which takes its fill of food and then sits down and chews the cud, so we are to take the Word, read and study it, and then sit down and meditate in the truth. My .... do you know what it is to (a) and (b) ? Let it become the very meat and drink of your soul. This is how our Saviour lived, this is how Joshua lived, and this is how we must live. Take the Word and (a) (b) and then,

**(c) LIVE IT OUT:**

"*That thou mayest observe to do .....*" ( 1:8 ) In other words, the Word was to be so ingrained in Joshua, so integral a part of his thinking that his natural bent was to live the book. Does this not condemn us ? So many of us are mere sermon tasters, and pew warmers, that we fail to live the book. My .... that which is heard in the holy place must be lived out in the market place ! Martin Luther speaking on one occasion of a pastor by the name of Nicolas Hussman said, "*what we preach he lives.*" Could that be said of us ? Do we take the book and look it up, let it in, live it out ? Here were the Children of Israel on the very Borders of Canaan and as they stood at its borders (1) (2) (3)

The Book of Joshua goes on to tell us of Israel,

1. *Entering the Land: ( 1:1-5:12 )*
2. *Conquering the Land: ( 5:13-12:24 )*
3. *Possessing the Land: ( Ch 13-24 )*

"**From Egypt to Canaan,**" Moses says, "*He brought us out .... that He might bring us in.*" ( Deut 6:23 ) Out of bondage into fruitfulness ! Can I ask in closing three questions. **Are you in ? Are you far in ? Are you getting others in ?**