

"BE STRONG AND OF GOOD COURAGE."

– JOSHUA 1:1-11. – *OCTOBER 5.* –

JOSHUA, the newly appointed leader of Israel, had been Moses' "minister" or servant, not in a menial sense, but in that higher sense in which we speak of "ministers of the Lord", Ministers of State, Prime Ministers, etc. He was eighty years of age at this time, and hence must have been forty when Israel left Egypt. He was of the tribe of Ephraim, of one of its leading families, his grandfather, Elishama, having been a captain of the army of the Ephraimites, 40,500 in number, at the organization of the Israelites soon after the exodus. We find Joshua with Moses as his special companion, in Mt. Sinai; we find him again as the representative of Moses, the general of all Israel in the first battle fought with the Amalekites; we find him again one of the leading men of all the tribes, sent to spy out the land of promise, and on this occasion he and Caleb were the only two whose faith in the Lord enabled them to return a favorable report, and, as we have already seen, in the giving of this report these men hazarded their lives; – so great was the chagrin and disappointment of the Israelites, and so fully were they in sympathy with the report of the majority.

All these events seem to indicate that Joshua was a man of large faith and large courage; moreover, we remember that notwithstanding his high position as Moses' chosen minister, he seems to have been entirely void of that ambition which led to the overthrow of Korah, Dathan and Abiram and many of the princes of Israel, and which previously had affected Miriam and Aaron. Although he is not mentioned as being so meek as Moses, we may from all these considerations, judge that the one whom the Lord chose for Moses' successor was indeed a meek man, and that his courage, exemplified in every feature of his history, was the result of his faith in the Lord and not the result of self-confidence. The lesson to be drawn from this by spiritual Israel is the one mentioned by our Lord; namely,

"Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." (Luke 14:11.) In this Joshua was a type of our Lord Jesus who, in turn, is the pattern which must be followed by all those who would be finally acceptable in the Lord. The Apostle's argument along this line, to all the spiritual Israelites, is, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time." – I Pet. 5:6.

Israel unquestioningly accepted the Lord's choice of a leader. As a people they were evidently learning something by their experience in the wilderness training school. At the beginning of their sojourn they were scarcely willing to recognize even Moses; but now they had come along so far as to be able to see that the Lord was their real Leader, and that even though Moses had died without bringing them into the promised land, God who had made the promise of Canaan to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and themselves, was abundantly able to accomplish his promise, and hence they were willing to accept whatever leadership the Lord should indicate. Spiritual Israelites, too, are to learn the same lesson; human leaders are important in their way – in so far as they are the divine choice – so far as we can see fulfilled in them the Lord's promised guidance of his people. But we are never to think of human leaders as indispensable; and God is likely to do again as in this case of Moses; namely, to remove a trusted leader and to appoint another in his stead, to the intent that **[R3079 : page 285]** his people may learn that he is their real Leader, that with him as their Guide they will surely have success, and that without him all earthly leadership would be in vain.

As we have seen, Moses prefigured the Law, the school-master which was to bring God's people to the promised land, to the promised blessing, restitution, etc. We have seen that as Israel was unready to enter in and to possess the land because of lack of faith in the beginning and, therefore, had its wilderness journey extended to forty years, so on account of lack of faith at our Lord's first advent they were prevented from joining with him in the restitution work and were made

to wander to gain further experiences and leadings during the past nineteen centuries; and now at the close of these experiences, they, as well as spiritual Israel, are again on the borders of the land of promise – the Millennial Kingdom. This time Joshua will take command, the Jordan will be crossed and the gracious promises begin to have their fulfilment. Meantime, the Joshua class, the Church, has been in process of development, and after the great time of trouble which is near at hand, the world in general will be ready to follow the leadership of Jesus as it is written of that time, "Many nations shall come and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths." – Micah 4:2.

As, meantime, Joshua needed encouragement, so now the Lord's consecrated ones, the members of the body of Christ, need encouragement, need to have pointed out to them the sureness of the divine promise, its lengths and breadths and depths, just as the Lord pointed out to Joshua the land of promise, from the wilderness to Mt. Lebanon, and eastward to the river Euphrates and westward to the Mediterranean Sea. Does faith waver and are we inclined to wonder how it will be possible for the new dispensation to accomplish such wonderful things as are necessary to be accomplished for the blessing and uplifting of the world of mankind? If so let us look backward and see how the divine power was exercised in a miraculous manner, not only through Moses at the crossing of the Red Sea and in the giving of the manna, in the victory of the Amalekites and in the water from the rock, but let us also notice how the Lord's providences were miraculously with Israel in various ways during the period of their favor, and let us remember that this same power of God in still larger measure is to be with the antitype of Moses, with the new Leader of the world, the great Messiah – Christ the Head and the Church, his body, in the work of blessing and restitution on behalf of all those who shall, under that full enlightenment, desire to be the people of God. As it was God with Moses and God with Joshua that brought the victories, etc., so it will be the power of God with the Church that will bring the

coming victories. "The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath." (Psa. 110:5.) "I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." (Psa. 2:8.) Again the Apostle declares that the Millennial victory of Christ shall be by and through the Father's power. (I Cor. 15:27.) As none were able to stand before Joshua as the Lord's representative, so none of the great forces of evil and the obstructions now in the pathway of the fulfilment of God's promises shall stand; all must fall before the antitypical Joshua. "As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God." (Rom. 14:11.) Satan himself shall be amongst these great enemies to be overthrown and utterly destroyed, and all of his works of evil – death itself being finally completely blotted out as an opponent of those in harmony with God and approved by him, – all others having been destroyed in the Second Death, which is not an enemy either to God or to those who are in accord with him or to any principle of righteousness or truth or goodness.

The land of promise is here mentioned as being the "land of the Hittites". Higher Critics were once inclined to think this reference to the Hittites an egregious error because they could find no record of such a people, and because from their standpoint the Bible is to be considered on a lower plane than are the secular histories of the world. However, all this has been changed because in the last few years excavations made in Assyria have disclosed ancient tablets whose testimony fully corroborates the statement that the Hittites were at this time a mighty people. Those who discount the Bible statements are at a disadvantage, while those who accept them are sure to be on the right side and, sooner or later, to have confidence and faith justified by evidences.

Three times in this lesson is Joshua encouraged by the Lord, "Be strong and of a good courage," "Be **[R3080 : page 285]** thou strong and very courageous," etc. (vs. 6,7,9.) There are different kinds of courage; one sort is begotten of egotism and self-reliance, another kind

is begotten of a recklessness which fails to take into account the difficulties of the situation, but the courage which the Lord inculcates and which all the spiritual Israelites are to seek to possess is the one which, while coolly and calmly discerning the trials and difficulties of the way and while humbly realizing its insufficiency for the occasion, is supported by a faith in the Lord – a trust in the divine promises which enables them to be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. This was to be Joshua's courage and it is to be ours in respect to all the things of the present life, as well as in respect to all the things of the Kingdom, confidence in the Lord whose servants we are, and whose work he has commissioned us to perform. The expression, "Turn not from it (the Law) to the right hand or to the left" does not signify a turning aside completely, but rather, according to the original, it means, Require neither more nor less than the divine standard; seek to keep as nearly as possible in absolute alignment with the divine Word. We find some Christian people disposed to add to the Law of God in great complacency, feeling that in thus getting in advance of the divine requirement they are showing the Lord a special zeal for righteousness. Some of the Pharisees of the Lord's day [R3080 : page 286] were thus disposed to add to the Word of God and to lay heavy burdens upon the people beyond what the Lord had required of them in the Law. The Lord's faithful ones are not to do this any more than to subtract from the divine requirements. Truth is truth; God's Word is God's Word; we are not authorized to take from it or to add to it. Many today have come to realize that the Bible does not teach an eternity of torment, and yet feeling that this doctrine may possibly help through fear to drive some into church membership, or to deter some from grosser forms of sin, they are rather inclined to favor the doctrine even though they admit it to be a blasphemy against the divine character, and in total violation of all principles of righteousness. Those who would be of the Joshua class are to learn that it is not their right or privilege to make laws or to ignore those already made, but so far as lies within their power to observe the divine principles of righteousness laid down in the divine Word, and to teach the same to others, leaving the consequences with the Lord.

=====