

CROSSING JORDAN INTO CANAAN.

– *JOSHUA 3:9-17. – OCTOBER 12. –*

"When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee." – Isa. 43:2.

FOUR HUNDRED and seventy years had elapsed from the time God gave Canaan to Abraham, by promise, before his descendants actually crossed Jordan and began to inherit the land. The promise had been long of fulfilment, and doubtless had severely taxed the faith of the people to whom it belonged; yet even in this respect the delay was a blessing to them, as serving to stimulate and develop faith. Nor are we to forget that the original promise has not yet been fulfilled; because the land was promised, not only to Abraham's seed, but also to himself, and the noble patriarch still rests and waits in the sleep of death for the accomplishment of the divine promise, which will be fulfilled on a far larger scale when the people of God shall have passed the antitypical Jordan into the antitypical Canaan – the Millennial Kingdom condition. We are not left in doubt upon this matter. We have the Apostle's words in Heb. 11:13,39,40, that Abraham and other faithful servants of the Lord still wait for the fulfilment of the promise made to them, until first the still higher, spiritual, heavenly promises, made to the Gospel Church, the Christ, shall have been accomplished, "God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." Stephen assures us along this same line, saying that Abraham received not so much of the land as to set his foot upon, and his argument, based upon this fact, is Abraham's resurrection in the future, and the fulfilment to him personally of his share in the divine promise. – Acts 7:25.

If in all this there was a lesson of patient waiting on the Lord and confident trust in his promise, to Abraham and his natural seed, there is a still larger and fuller lesson in it to Spiritual Israel, the spiritual Seed, along the same lines of faithful, patient waiting on the Lord for

the fulfilment of the exceeding great and precious things he has promised us.

Some have been inclined to question the justice of God's giving to Israel the land of Canaan, already inhabited by others; – the justice of not only permitting but commanding them to destroy the inhabitants of that land, and to take possession of it as their own. This transaction is held up as an illustration of the "land-grabbing" disposition of natural man, which seems to increase century by century, notwithstanding the increase of civilization and the general appreciation of justice. We are not of those who would defend the course of nations of modern times along these lines. As Christians, guided by our Master's example and instruction, we should seek to do good unto all men as we have opportunity, and to leave them in peaceable possession of their homes, property and liberties. We are to recognize a difference, however, between the divine law of love, placed upon and accepted by the Lord's consecrated people, and the law of selfishness, under which the mass of mankind – including the vast majority of nominal Christendom – still operates, and will continue to operate until the new dispensation and its new laws shall be ushered in by divine power. Nevertheless, seeing that the Church is separate from the world, in the Lord's plan and in his dealings, we can look with comparative equanimity upon the overriding of justice and equity by the kingdoms of this world, and may realize that in many instances the Lord may take advantage of their natural disposition toward warfare and conquest and empire-building, and may allow the wrath of man thus to work out certain features that will be ultimately favorable to the accomplishment of the divine purposes.

Not being able to see behind the veil all the gracious purposes of our Heavenly Father, and not being wise enough to know how they can best be carried out, the Lord's people occupy largely the position of spectators in respect to the course of this **[R3085 : page 297]** world, – its politics, conquests, etc. Were we to take a hand in the world's affairs on either side of such questions we might, for aught we know,

be working contrary to the divine will and program. While, therefore, we seek to be separate from the world and its affairs, and to give our thought and attention, sympathy and interest, to the affairs of the heavenly Kingdom, and while our voices, if ever raised at all on such questions, should be raised on behalf of justice, mercy and peace, nevertheless, we can view with great composure whatever changes may take place in the world, knowing that our heavenly Father has all power to overrule these matters differently if he chooses.

We say to ourselves, "All the good purposes which he hath purposed in himself shall be accomplished;" and he knoweth how to accomplish these in the manner that will be most to his praise and most for the good of his cause, as it shall ultimately be developed, and we remember the Master's words, "Ye are not of this world, even as I am not of this world. I have chosen you out of the world, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain" – fruit unto eternal life. Our work is the work of him that sent us; we are ambassadors for God; and present work is the calling, upbuilding, instructing and general preparation of the Church to be the Bride, the Lamb's Wife, and our mission is to co-operate in her call and to make ready. Later on will come our share in the ruling and judging of the world, as kings and priests of the divine order, in the divine time, and backed by the divine power to success and the blessing of all the families of the earth.

"The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." He, therefore, had the right to give Canaan to the descendants of Abraham without giving a reason why to any creature. He had a right to give it when and how and to whom he pleased. He does, however, condescend to inform us that in blotting out these many little nations of Palestine, descendants of Noah's grandson Canaan, he did so not along arbitrary lines, but along lines of justice. These Canaanites (also known as Hittites, and by various other tribal names, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Jebusites and Amorites) were not ignorant savages, but quite civilized peoples who, after the manner of the Sodomites, had

gone into great excesses of licentious idolatry. In Abraham's time God foresaw where their course would lead them, but he delayed to bring the promised seed of Abraham into their land for a time, because as we read, "the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet come to the full." – Gen. 15:16.

These people were to be destroyed by the Israelites for two reasons; first, to have permitted them to live and to become incorporated with the Israelites in the land, by intermarriage, etc., would have been injurious to the seed of Abraham which God intended to develop, and of which he designed to make types of spiritual Israel. Furthermore, in the type which the Lord was making on a large scale, these Canaanites or Amorites represented the weaknesses and imperfections of the fallen nature. They symbolized sin; and their destruction by the Israelites prefigured the destruction of sin, the blotting out of the blemishes of sin, and the gradual uplifting of God's people in the antitype of Canaan – in the Millennial Kingdom.

The chief difficulty in most minds, in connection with this slaughtering of the inhabitants of Canaan lies in the unscriptural thought, brought into Christian creeds during the dark ages, that the apparent death of an individual is really his entrance into more abundant life, either under pleasurable or tormenting conditions. And since these Canaanites were declared to be disapproved of God, the general thought respecting them is that while the Israelites killed them and took possession of their property, they, without further opportunity, were thrown at once under the control of devils and into an eternity of flaming torture. There is nothing of this kind connected with the Bible narrative. It is all the addition of human imagination, built upon numerous fantastic speculations of the dark ages. According to the Scriptures, death is really death, and these Canaanites, when slain by the sword of Israel, became unconscious, and will remain so until the Lord's time shall come for their awakening from the sleep of death. They shall come forth in the Millennial morning, as our Lord's word indicates – "All that are in their graves

shall hear the voice of the Son of Man, and shall come forth." – John 5:28,29.

They will not come forth as saints to the resurrection of life, the First Resurrection; but as members of the world in general, redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, they will come forth to the judgment-resurrection; that is, to the gradual raising up that will be instituted during the Millennial age, a raising up of all who will be obedient to the judgments, the disciplines, the corrections in righteousness, which will be then brought to bear upon the whole world of mankind by the great Judge, our Lord Jesus, and by the Royal Priesthood, the Church, his assistant judges, of whom the Apostle says, "Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world?" – I Cor. 6:2,3.

In view of this, then, we can readily see that no injustice was done to the Canaanites by the Lord's decree, and that so far as they were concerned they suffered no more than, if as much as if some pestilence or famine or other common disaster had come upon them. They suffered the death-penalty, as all the human family suffer it, and our confident hope respecting them and all mankind is built upon the fact that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son to redeem all from the curse or sentence of death which came upon all through father Adam's disobedience; – and that he who redeemed the world is shortly to bless all the families of the earth with a gracious opportunity to come back into harmony with God, back to human perfection. And when we realize that the call of the church in the present time is for association in this work, it gives a meaning to the trials and difficulties which constitute part of our instructions in that great work; and it also gives the Royal Priesthood a hope toward God which overbalances all the trials of the present time. **[R3085 : page 298]**

The Land of Promise, Canaan, is frequently described in the Scriptures as a goodly land, "a land flowing with milk and honey," a figurative expression representing its general prosperity and

productiveness. That the inhabitants were wealthy is attested by recently unearthed Egyptian histories of about that time. Geike says:

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"The records of Rameses II show the condition of Palestine and adjacent countries, in the age of Moses itself [prior to the exodus of Israel]. The Egyptian king brought back from them, he tells us, gold, glass, gum, cattle, slaves, ivory, ebony, boats, horses, chariots inwrought with gold and silver or painted, iron, steel, dates, oil, wine, asses, cedar, suits of armor, fragrant wood, war galleys, incense, gold dishes with handles, ornaments of lapis lazuli, silver dishes, precious stones, honey, lead, spears of brass, colors – the plunder, in fact, of a rich and civilized country. The meadows of Palestine, its fortresses, its groves and its orchards, are mentioned showing that prosperity of every kind abounded."

The Israelites needed to be encouraged for so great an undertaking, and hence the various tribes of Canaanites were mentioned by Joshua, that they might know that they were all included in the Lord's bequest; and that they might know that he had taken cognizance of the whole situation. It was much to Israel's advantage that these various tribes of Canaanites were distinctly separate, and did not cooperate to any particular degree. Moreover, they evidently felt secure in that the River Jordan separated between the hosts of Israel and their land, and being quite a swift river, it would be very difficult for a multitude to cross without boats or bridges, and many of them. The crossing took place when the Jordan was overflowing its banks, and was therefore much wider than usual; and we may presume that the Canaanites would feel so much the more secure, and less vigilant in any attempt to repel an invasion, supposing the river to be specially impassable at this particular season. Had the crossing been undertaken when the river was low, the Canaanites would have, undoubtedly, disputed the way; and Israel would have had a severe battle with poor weapons against a probably well equipped enemy. Besides, the miracle God intended to work would have seemed much less forcible

at any other season of the year. Israel needed this further miracle and evidence of divine power and intervention on their behalf to give them courage for the work before them.

A man from each of the twelve tribes was selected; each one was to carry a stone from the midst of the Jordan to the shore, and these twelve large stones were to be set up as a memorial, a reminder to Israelites for coming generations of how the Lord had brought them over Jordan. (Josh. 4:2,9.) The priests bearing the ark were separated from the remainder of the Israelites by about three-quarters of a mile (two thousand cubits). They went upstream this distance, and were thus prominent before the eyes of Israel in what they did. As soon as the feet of the priests before the ark touched the waters of Jordan the waters began to subside, and as the waters subsided they took another step and another and another until they were able to walk on firm ground to the center of the river-bed, where they stood firmly until all the hosts of Israel – in all about two millions – had passed over. Still in no haste, they waited until twelve stones were placed where they had stood, and then the priests with the ark of the Lord passed over.

We are not to question the power of God in respect to this miracle, in whatever manner it was accomplished; but in looking for the manner we are to presume, as far as possible, that the Lord used some natural means in connection with it. If we were to suppose that the river rose up like a wall at the right hand of the priests, as tho it had been cut by a knife, it would seem unreasonable, and the downflowing waters would rise higher and higher, until it would overflow the banks on either side more and more, **[R3086 : page 298]** and the water of even a small river, at this flood time, would amount to a considerable quantity and flood a considerable space. It is preferable, therefore, that we understand the words of the record, as implied in the Revised Version, to mean that the banking up of the waters was "a great way off, at Adam, the city that is beside Zeretan." In other words, we are not to understand that the dammed up wall of waters was close by the priests, but about twenty miles further up the river, near the town of

Adam, where the river passes through a comparatively narrow gorge. How they were banked up there we are not informed by the record; no matter in what manner, it was a miracle – no less a miracle if we understood the method pursued by the Lord in its accomplishment. It may have been that an earthquake temporarily elevated the channel at this narrow place, and thus gorged the water for a time; and it is said that there are evidences at that point that some such physical disturbances did once occur. Or a slip in a hillside might have carried a large body of soil into the valley, and thus have choked the stream, which even down at Jericho is normally only ninety feet wide and thirteen feet deep. As an illustration of how this may have occurred we quote the following from Canon Tristram: –

M. Ganneau has drawn attention to the fact, mentioned in the history of Sultan Buybars, that in A.D. 1267, whilst the bridge at Gier Damich (or Adam) was being repaired a landslip some miles above dammed up the Jordan for several hours and the bed of the river below was left dry, the water being drained off to the Dead Sea. What occurred 650 years ago, by what we call natural causes, may well have occurred 3,000 years before, timed by divine interposition."

In our previous studies we noticed that these things were written aforetime for our admonition – that they were examples or types of matters respecting God's dealings in the future: now the question arises, What did this passing of Jordan by the typical people symbolize? and, especially, what did the bearing of the ark by the priests have to do with it? We have already indicated that for various reasons we cannot accept the view of Jordan and of Canaan so long held by many Christians, which represents Jordan as being death and Canaan as being heaven, as expressed by the familiar lines of the poet: **[R3086 : page 299]**

"On Jordan's stormy banks I stand,
And cast a wishful eye
To Canaan's fair and happy land,

Where my possessions lie.
No chilling winds nor boisterous breath
Can reach that healthful shore;
Sickness and sorrow, pain and death,
Are felt and feared no more."

The very fact that the Israelites did have trials and pains and sorrows and battles, after they entered into Canaan, seems to contradict the thought that it represented heaven itself. As we have already intimated, our understanding is that Canaan typified the new earth condition, under the administration of the Millennial Kingdom. What, then, does the River Jordan signify? We answer, that it would seem to stand for, represent, the divine condemnation, the curse, the sentence against our race which has for six thousand years hindered mankind from entering into the blessed Kingdom conditions and opportunities and blessings which shall ultimately prevail for all. In this sense of the word death, Jordan, would stand for it well – the death sentence. This seems rather to be implied in the name of the river, which is derived from the names of the two main springs by which it is formed; viz., *jor*, signifying "down," and *dan*, which signifies "judge." The word Jordan would thus have the significance of "judged down," that is, condemned, and as a type it would stand for the divine condemnation which hindered even those who desired to be the servants of God from entering into peace and rest and blessing and favor with God.

In this view of the matter, we see how appropriate it was that the Ark of God's covenant, representing the Lord himself, his grace, his goodness, his promises, should stand in the midst of Jordan – effecting a cancellation of the sentence of death – in order that the Millennial blessings might be attained by all under the lead of Joshua's antitype. That the Ark of God was borne by the high-priest and the under-priests, and that these first passed into Jordan, is also significant: it represented how our great High-Priest and the Royal Priesthood, his Church, must first pass into Jordan before any of the people could pass

over. And the fact that the high-priest and the under-priests stood in the midst of Jordan while the people all crossed over, illustrates how the passing over, free from divine condemnation, will be effected by the work of the great High-Priest, and his associated "brethren." He gave himself for our sins; he became a curse for us; he, as the man Christ Jesus, stopped in the midst of Jordan, that the world might pass over; the Royal Priesthood are following him in this sacrifice, and they too are stopping in the midst of Jordan; they also, as joint-heirs with their Lord, lay down their lives on behalf of the brethren, – to the intent that the whole world of mankind, or as many as will, may enter into the glorious Kingdom privileges, according to the divine arrangement.

It was not necessary that the priests should remain in Jordan, and die there, on behalf of the delivered Israelites, in order to complete the type, for instead, by the Lord's direction, twelve stones were placed where they stood, representing the twelve tribes of Israel – representing the 144,000 out of all the twelve tribes (Rev. 7:1-8) who constitute the Royal Priesthood, and who become dead with Christ, according to the flesh, that they may live with him as new creatures, partakers of the divine nature, and participators with him in the great work of blessing all the families of the earth.

JUDGE NOT BY OUTWARD APPEARANCE

Judge not; the workings of the brain
And of the heart thou can'st not see;
What looks to thy dim eye a stain,
In God's pure light may only be
A scar, brought from some well-won field,
Where thou would'st only faint and yield.

The look, the air, that frets thy sight,
May be a token that below
The soul had closed in deadly fight
With some internal, fiery foe,
Whose glance would scorch thy smiling grace,

And cast thee, shuddering, on thy face.

The fall thou darest to despise:
May be the angel's slackened hand
Has suffered it that he may rise
And take a firmer, surer stand;
Or, trusting less to earthly things,
May henceforth learn to use his wings.

And judge none lost; but wait and see,
With hopeful pity, not disdain;
The depth of the abyss may be
The measure of the height of pain
And love and glory that may raise
This soul to God in after days.

– *Selected.*
