

Canaan

Part 1

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[00:00:00] I would like to begin by taking you back in the story of the journey from Egypt to Canaan to a time which we cannot pinpoint exactly, but which must have been very near to the beginning of the 40 years during which we read that the Israelites roamed in the desert.

Twelve men had been sent out to Reconnoitre, the promised land, and after 40 days they came back and two of them were staggering beneath the load of a most enormous bunch of grapes that they'd brought back as a specimen of the produce of the land that the Lord had promised to them through their fathers, the land flowing with milk and honey. And then there ensued the most astounding scene, because the majority of the people [00:01:08] were for immediately turning back into the desert. A very small number, comprising two of the spies, Joshua and Caleb, together with Moses and Aaron, were for going on into the land which they'd come to possess. They saw through the eyes of the two spies the land of pure delight, the land that the Lord God had promised to their fathers, but the majority saw only the giants and the difficulties, and the result was that their voices prevailed and they turned back from life in the land of promise to death in the desert. Now all these things we have read [00:02:02] already this week, all these things were written for our learning, upon whom the ends of the world are come, and we are reading these things so that we might not make the frightful mistake that they made and prefer to turn back to death in the desert rather than to press on to life in the land of promise. Now in moving forward to that part of the story which concerns us this evening, I think the first thing we have to notice is that right from the very beginning the land of Canaan as a gift from God to the people was the goal in view. If we go back to the story of Abraham, the Lord called him out of Ur of the Chaldees and said to him, to thee and to thy seed will I give [00:03:01] this land. And when God spoke to Moses for the children of Israel at the time 440 years later when they were to be rescued from the land of bondage, he said I'm going to take you out of this land and I'm going to take you into a land good and large, a land flowing with milk and honey that I promised to your fathers. And right through the story if we had asked any instructed Israelite the question what's the ultimate, the final end in view in the journey that we are taking under the command of God and the leadership of his servant Moses, he would have said it's the land of promise, it's the land of pure delight, it's the land flowing with milk and honey. Indeed the Lord had said let my people go that he may serve me and we would be very right to emphasize the fact that we have been saved to serve. But the ultimate goal is something beyond [00:04:07] the fact that we've been saved to serve. The ultimate goal is that we might possess, that's the great word for which we read the first passage this evening, that we might possess our land of promise. It's therefore very important indeed that we should ask the question what is Canaan for the Christian? When I read those explanations and prayers and exhortations which are directly applicable to us as Christians, there was nothing at all about Canaan. But you see this is one of the very good examples of the types that we've been speaking about. I

think I ought to say immediately it will be, as the theologians will tell us, it will be an [00:05:08] oversimplification. But I think under the circumstances we might be forgiven a moderate amount of oversimplification. And it's this. We read in Ephesians and we read in Joshua.

Joshua. Now the first statement that if you're writing things down I'd like you to write down, and it's this. That Joshua, the book of Joshua equals Ephesians. Well what a mathematician would make of that equality sign I don't know. But I'm sure it will mean to you what I want it to mean to you. That in the Bible the New Testament equivalent on the spiritual plane of the book of Joshua in the Old Testament on the material plane, then the book of Ephesians corresponds to the book of Joshua. The epistle to the Ephesians corresponds to the history of Joshua. Now if we were to read just one verse, not in the series that we read, I'll read it [00:06:09] in Ephesians chapter one verse three. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. Now I take that to be a kind of inspired heading for the epistle to the Ephesians, and I want you to write down again if you are writing down two more uses of the equality sign that Canaan equals heavenly places and that the spiritual blessings have their examples in the grapes and the pomegranates and the figs in the lovely fruits of Canaan. Heavenly places is represented in the Joshua story by the land of Canaan and the lovely fruits of the land of [00:07:03] Canaan are the spiritual blessings by which we are blessed in Christ Jesus. I found a great deal of help in reading a book on the book of Joshua by a minister of former times, F.B. Meyer, and he has a remark which I think is simple, two remarks which I think are simple and true and concise, and they'll help us to take away a proper understanding of this matter. In his book on Joshua, he's asking the question that we are asking, what is for the Christian represented by Canaan a land of promise? This is what he says, heavenly places stands for that spiritual experience of oneness with the risen Savior in his resurrection and exaltation which is the privilege of all saints. Now that's the substance of what we read in Ephesians chapter one at the [00:08:02] end and Ephesians chapter two. He goes on with another quote, the spiritual meaning of the story of Joshua tells of that satisfaction of rest, wealth, and victory which may be enjoyed by those who come to know the secret things which God has prepared for them that love him and are already revealed by his Spirit. Now we'll come back to those words which are absolutely true to the epistle to the Ephesians, it is that satisfaction of wealth and victory which composes the secret things that God has prepared for his own. Now before I come to reflect upon that particular kind of definition in greater detail, I think that someone may very well make the suggestion that we have up to now understood that Canaan [00:09:09] represents heaven, our entrance perhaps by the coming of the Lord and perhaps by our death into heaven. Now when I first began to speak about these things many years ago, I saw some notes the other day which made me blush rather because I attacked this idea with the utmost venom such a thing, the idea that Canaan represents our heavenly home that we're going to go to in a future life. Well I think I've thought better of it in these days and I'm glad I have because one of our young friends said to me fairly early in the week, you know if I'm not jumping the gun, he said I'd like to know what's the difference between thinking of Canaan as our heavenly home in the future and Canaan that we can possess now? And that's a very very intelligent and important question [00:10:04] and I'll try to answer it with the light that I have now and not the light that I had many years ago. In one of the hymns that we have been singing this week, this idea is very there. When to Canaan's long love dwelling, love divine thy foot shall bring and so on. There no stranger God shall greet thee, stranger thou in courts above. He brings you to Canaan it says and so there is in that hymn by J. N. Darby, there is the idea that heaven in the future is represented for us by the children of Israel entering into Canaan. And I remember very well when I was a tiny little fellow, people think about the dates of hymn books these days and in those days we used to use the 1881 little flock hymn book. And there was a very favorite hymn which said [00:11:05] that we were going on to Canaan to meet to part no more on Canaan's

happy shore and I can see an old brine brother stamping his feet and clapping his hands as he said to meet to part no more on Canaan's happy shore. Was he wrong? Of course he wasn't wrong, it does mean that. But that's not the meaning that we're concentrating on today and this is the way it appeals to me now as the right way to understand this particular question. The land of Canaan came into the possession of the children of Israel in three ways and in three stages. They possessed it first of all by deed of gift from God. I read how long before these events even began God gave that land to Abraham and to his seed expressly delimiting its frontiers far bigger than any frontiers the land [00:12:05] has possessed up to now. But it was first of all given to them by the gift of God long before. So they possessed it from that time forward, the seed of Abraham. But in the story we have read, the story which is encompassed by the book of Joshua, we find they possessed it in a new way. They possessed it in so far as they fought for it and won. In so far as they dispossessed the inhabitants and possessed it themselves. And the lovely hills and valleys and the milk and honey and the sweet fruits of Canaan, they enjoyed them. They tasted them because in actual fact they possessed them. But there was a limit. They possessed them in proportion to their faithfulness and their victory in fighting for them in the wars of the Lord and to the Lord's directions. [00:13:04] But there's still another part of the story. In the future when the Lord Jesus Christ comes to reign over an earth in which his earthly people are the first of the nations, they will with only the complete limits of God's promise before them, they will possess the land not only limited by their conquest but in the full measure of the purpose and gift of God they will possess that land. Now the second of these two meanings is the one that we are thinking of tonight. We're wanting to encourage each other not to make this terrible mistake of turning back to death in the desert but to go in and fight the good fight of faith and lay hold on eternal life and to possess the land, the spiritual blessings that are made available to us in Christ Jesus in heavenly places [00:14:01] which is the expression which corresponds to the land of Canaan in the Old Testament. Now in that quotation from F.B. Meyer I began by saying, he said, it was that experience of satisfaction, that experience of satisfaction. Now you know there isn't complete satisfaction in any other than Christ himself and his Father made known, but the complete satisfaction that is set before us as that which we shall enjoy in perfection in the day to come, but it's set before us now as an experience into which in proportion that we're willing to bring spiritual diligence and courage and resist and withstand the evil powers in the spiritual realm that set themselves against us every time we set our purpose to enter [00:15:03] into the land of Canaan, then there is satisfaction, true satisfaction available to us now in this. This is exactly what the prayer that we read means when it says that we might be filled to all the fullness of God. It said about Naphtali, about their particular portion in the land, satisfied with favor and filled full with the blessing of the Lord and therefore it is true that the land of Canaan stands for that satisfaction of heart and mind that God in an earthly sense planned for his people and the Lord now offers to us in the spiritual sense of the spiritual blessings that are set out for us in this epistle to the Ephesians and indeed in other parts of the scripture. Everyone who looks for satisfaction in earthly things, he will find it perhaps in a [00:16:03] measure. There are matters of heart's delight in earthly relationships that are set before us and our hearts do indeed long for them and to a certain measure we enjoy satisfaction in them. But every person of mature experience recognizes the fact that there is always a cloud hanging over them because of the sinful nature that is still within us and it is only in the knowledge of the Father's love in Jesus Christ the Son that we really can have a satisfaction which will be unchanged as we go forward into the Father's house in heaven and therefore being filled to all the fullness of God is one of the things that the apostle prays for these brethren and it's one of the elements of their entering and possessing their own Canaan, that is, spiritual blessings [00:17:04] in heavenly places. The picture I present to myself of this expression filled to all the fullness of God in the prayer is the idea of a tiny vessel such as we might have. It's not only taken to the tap and filled but it's immersed in the ocean. It's not only filled itself but it's absolutely immersed in that which is the fullness of God and there's no

room left in such an experience for the tiniest particle of disappointment. Whatever we may be able to experience of the merciful provisions that God makes for our journey at the present time, oh do let us recognize the fact that it's only in the love of God in Christ that we shall ever really find that fullness, that satisfaction, that perfectness, that completeness which we'll only fully know when we get to heaven itself. The next element that we had in the quotation [00:18:08] that I gave you was that it was an experience of wealth and I sometimes paraphrase.

You cannot give an unqualified approval to anybody's paraphrase, but I think we can be permitted them as a means of trying to explain to each other and help that the prayer that we read, I sometimes paraphrase to my own help by this expression, instead of saying according to the riches of his glory, it means something like this, that God, we want God to do this for us according to the wealth of his illustrious rank. You see, what a person can do for us depends what he possesses and it's according to the wealth of the illustrious rank which is the sole majesty [00:19:02] of divinity that God is willing to expend that wealth in order that we might have the blessings that follow, being rooted and founded in love, we might be with all saints to comprehend what is the breadth and length and depth and height to know the love of Christ that passes knowledge to be filled to all the fullness of God. You know, one of the greatest things for us to learn, old and young, is to realize where true wealth, true riches lie. True riches lie in Canaan.

True riches lie in the full revelation and knowledge of God in Christ on his side of things. I think I said before, and many of you will have read it for yourselves, I think it's, we have the kind of parable due to Archbishop Temple that the world is like a shop in which somebody has been in and has switched all the prices about so that we find a mink coat for 50 pence, [00:20:04] we find a piece of Christmas tinsel for 250 pounds, found a little toy car for 1,500 pounds, and so on and so on. If such a thing happened then you would see persons going along the street past the store in question and some of them would look at it and then suddenly stop and look again and then smiling with superior satisfaction pass by. But lots of people would turn back and look again and dive in and come out looking mighty silly. And only those who had a real understanding of the value of things would not make fools of themselves under situations like this. It's a matter of tremendous importance to know which are the really valuable things, to know where true wealth lies, and all how we ought to help each other and charge each other to see that there are the word of God piles up the statements of the fact that the true riches are only found [00:21:04] in the Lord Jesus Christ. I've quoted one, according to the riches of his glory. A little later in the epistle the apostle Paul's job, his calling, was to make known amongst the nations the unsearchable riches of Christ. To the Colossians he said, in whom I hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, the true wealth is to be found only in the Lord Jesus Christ and in the spiritual blessings which he brings for us. And in saying this I think I have sort of begun to penetrate what is at the heart of the matter and that is what it says in that prayer in Ephesians about knowing the love of Christ. There's a build-up to it. Are you surprised there's a build-up to it? Such a tremendous thing, such an absolutely central thing that lies at the very heart of the matter that being rooted and founded in love we might be strengthened with might by [00:22:07] his spirit in the inner man that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith that we may know the love of Christ that passeth knowledge. That's the very heart of the matter. Mr. Waller, I think it was, in his very excellent talk to us about the types, he seemed to me to fling a little left-handed smack at what he had heard people say about the old corn of the land. This seemed to me, to be in his mind, the very worst possible case of people allowing the idea of types to go wild. I don't think he meant that really, but I'm only wanting to persuade you that he didn't. Because when you think about the contrast between the manner and the old corn of the land, you see, it's obviously a parable. And when you stop to [00:23:03] think about it, it's a pretty plain parable also. It's a very valuable concept indeed. And

that is, you see, they're both food. But one is food suitable to the desert life, where there's nothing there at all to sustain us in our pathway, only what comes down from God. Whereas the other is the food that belongs to heavenly places. It's the very heart of God set out and open in its love to those who are on God's side of things. They both represent the Lord Jesus Christ. But the manner, you see, represents the Lord Jesus Christ, the darling of the Father's heart, the one who was ever in his bosom and daily his delight. Yet that wonderful person came down to earth, and he lived the life of a true man. And he spoke to us of the true things that men upon earth need. He was the bread of heaven come down to be food suitable to us in [00:24:05] this wilderness world through which we pass. But the Lord Jesus Christ is also food in another sense. Do you really think that the great God, with all his love, is satisfied with representing to us what meets our need on our side of the thing? That God looks down into our houses and says that he knows what we have need of? This is true. This is wonderful. This is strengthening beyond measure. But it isn't all. God wants to bring us over to his side of things, that in that home of glory and love, the eternal home which is the Father's house, there the love of Christ, the love that moves between the Father and the Son, on their own side of things, in their own home, is the thing that God represents to us as the food that belongs to Canaan, the food that belongs to the promised land. And although I will admit one thing, and that is as [00:25:04] far as I remember there's nothing at all in the original language to correspond with the world old, but there is a contrast that the manna ceased on the same day that they first of all reaped the corn of Canaan, the corn that grew in the land. It was heavenly food for heavenly people. And so the heart of the matter, the very heart of the matter, is the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord, the love of the Father and the Son, as they're known in the Father's house in eternity. And this is what we can see spread out before us.

Now, in every part of our study we have thought of there being a new aspect of the cross.

In fact, it might be said that the real heart of our study is the various new lights, the various [00:26:04] new aspects in which are presented to us, that subject, that event of the deepest possible significance, and that is the death of our Savior at Calvary. So far as the guilt of our sins are concerned, it was the Passover lamb. He bore our sins and therefore is our protection against the destroying angel of the judgment of God. If we think of sin as slavery, then the death of the Lord Jesus Christ unto sin in the world is our escape out of that slavery, and through it we are free. If we think of the fatal venom of sin in the flesh that has been so feelingly described to us, if we think of that, then it's God's own Son in the likeness of the thing that caused the trouble, that is that sin in the flesh, bearing it, bearing its condemnation, so that we might be a clean place where that new greater power of the Holy Spirit can grant us liberation from the power of indwelling [00:27:05] sin. And it's not any different here. The entrance which has been granted us into this promised land, spiritual blessings in heavenly places, is another great and important aspect of the cross of Christ. In the first chapter of Ephesians, when we were dead in trespasses and sins, we find our Savior in death, and that means there's a complete end to that whole state of life which represents our sinful life here upon earth. But our Savior rose from the dead, and it's according to the exceeding greatness of the power of his resurrection that we have been raised from the dead in the spiritual way and be called to ascend and sit in heavenly places in Christ. Now I haven't time to describe that anymore. In fact, the major part of what I'm trying to do this evening is to try to persuade you [00:28:02] gently, all of you, that a way lying out ahead there, there is more to follow, there is something not only to occupy your whole lives in growing into it, there's always something in front for you, but in heaven itself you will certainly enjoy in its perfection those things that have so moved your heart with the partial broken glimpses that we can get here upon earth. And finally, I want to point out another very important parallel, and that is just as Canaan was the place above all where God's people fought. They had

many fights in the course of the story, but there was only one fight that God intended them to fight, and that was the fight to dispossess their enemies in Canaan and possess it for themselves. And one of the great facts which proclaims that the book of Ephesians in the New Testament corresponds to Joshua in the Old Testament is the fact that we are told to put on [00:29:02] the whole armor of God, and we are told to be strong in the power of the Lord. You know, this is no myth, this is no pretty story, that we can be strong in the power of Christ. Christ is alive, and his power is a real thing. I expect most of you in your childhood knew Newbold's poem of Drake's drum, which begins by describing Drake a thousand miles away, slung between the round shot in Numbra Deos Bay, and dreaming all the time of Plymouth Ho. But one of the verses goes something like this, if I remember it lightly. Drake, he was a Devon man, and ruled the Devon seas. Roving though his death fell, he went with heart aflame, and thinking all the time of Plymouth Ho. If the Dons sight Devon, he's supposed to say, I'll quit the port of heaven and drum them up the channel [00:30:04] as we drummed them long ago. That was quite a thrilling poem and quite a good story, but not one jot of help will England's seamen get from Drake, except by the inspiration of his example.

He's dead and gone, but when we are told to be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his light, might, then there is real strength there. And the conflict that we have is a very special one. We are told that we are to withstand evil spiritual powers, and when it's all done to be still found standing. In other words, the particular facet of the fight that's given us here in Ephesians is that God, by his counsel, by his purpose, by the death of Christ, and by the gift of the Spirit from Christ ascended, Christ has set our feet down upon this wonderful plot of land. And every time you get down on your knees to pray the prayer of Ephesians 3, then you're aware [00:31:06] of evil spiritual powers resisting you, and you have to fight them in the strength of the Lord, and get down upon your knees and continue to pray that the Holy Spirit will make these things good to you. Well, I want to close with this. In both our morning studies and our evening meetings, and the two great themes that have been before us have been the cross and the Spirit. The cross upon which the Lord of glory died, in the face of which the vain things that charm us most will be let go, and it would pour contempt and all our pride. The great power which has been able to deal with the all which is passing away, the sin in every form of its chameleon-like appearance, the cross has dealt with it. But the present power by which all this [00:32:08] can be made good in us is the power of the Spirit, and the means whereby it is made good to us is not I, not I, but Christ. The greatest practical lesson that we could possibly take away from us, not I, but Christ. When the Portuguese explorers first rounded the Cape, and the reason for all the trouble in Portuguese Africa at the moment is that it was the Portuguese who first got round that Cape. But when they were sailing along, I think they were sailing up the eastern shore, they saw evidences of Christianity in a certain not very good form, but they saw evidences of Christianity having been there before. They saw a ruined church with an enormous gold cross blazing in the sunlight. Well, we don't think much of ruined churches in the religious sense, [00:33:06] or great gold crosses blazing in the sunlight. But what the man who saw this or heard about it went away and wrote is good. In the cross of Christ, our glory, towering all the wrecks of time, all the light of sacred story, gathers round its head sublime.