

LIVING IN THE PROMISED LAND

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The Israelites had been on a long journey since leaving Egypt more than 40 years earlier. They witnessed the miraculous hand of God crossing the Red Sea, leaving Pharaoh's army to drown behind them. They were the beneficiary of God's miraculous provision during a 40-year trek in the wilderness. They were brought to the very brink of Canaan, their land of promise, when Moses died, not ever having set foot in that land. A new leader, Joshua, would take them across the Jordan and into the Promised Land. Once across, they faced the occupants of Canaan who represented a formidable threat. Joshua and his people knew that this was their land. God had promised it to them, but it would require some severe battles before Israel would be able to take possession of this land. Scripture records that there were a total of 31 kingdoms that were defeated under Joshua's leadership. I have written earlier of these battles, and of their spiritual significance for the battles that we face on our quest to possess the Kingdom of Heaven (see "[Possessing the Promised Land](#)" on this website).

Once in the Promised Land, and having now taken possession of a large portion of that land, the Israelites were now faced with an entirely different set of circumstances than what they were accustomed to in both Egypt and in the

wilderness. They would face new opportunities and challenges that required a different way of living than what they had known. It was, for them, uncharted territory. This article explores these opportunities and challenges through a spiritual lens; for this is the land that we have entered. The Lord would have us understand the spiritual terrain of the land to which He has been taking us as we, too, are living in an uncharted terrain. You may have come out of a secular background that involved a lifestyle of bondage to a rat race of materialism and self-indulgence. Many of you have come out of church systems which placed their own burdensome yokes upon you. Regardless of the nature of your Egypt, you are now faced with a paradigm shift for living out your spiritual life. Let's consider what this shift meant for our spiritual ancestors and glean from the lessons they learned for our own Promised-Land lifestyle.

Unconquered Territory

The victories that the Israelites secured after crossing the Jordan as they took possession were impressive, and by all accounts they had earned the reputation of a mighty warrior people. There were, however, territories that yet remained unconquered at the time of Joshua's death. Within these territories were the Philistines, some of the most powerful inhabitants occupying Israel's Promised Land. These people were the giants that put so much fear into the spies who came back with a negative report some 20 years earlier. And so it was that the Philistines, as well as several other peoples, remained as "unfinished business" for the Israelites who took up residence in the land of Canaan.

God promised His people that He would go before them and drive out the remaining occupants of their Promised Land:

And the Lord your God, He shall expel them from before you, and drive them from out of your sight; and ye shall possess their land, as the Lord your God hath promised unto you (Joshua 23:5).

God's promise to go before them was not unconditional, however. There were several conditions laid down in this chapter of promise, the 23rd chapter of Joshua:

- They were to remain courageous (v. 6)
- They were to remain obedient to the laws written in the book of the law of Moses (v. 6)
- They were not to turn aside, neither to the right or to the left (v. 6)
- They were not to serve or acknowledge the gods of the remaining nations, but cleave unto the Lord (v. 7)
- They were not to intermarry with these nations (vs. 12-13)

I have pondered the question of whether Joshua failed to complete his mission by not taking out all of these other city-states prior to his death. I had always believed this to be the case, but we see no evidence whatsoever in the scriptural account that God is angry at or disappointed in Joshua regarding this matter. If, however, we understand the Old Testament narrative as a shadow and type of greater spiritual realities yet to unfold, even in our day—indeed, even in our personal conquest of taking the Kingdom—we see that this ancient drama is a picture of the violence that the Kingdom of Heaven must suffer, and of the passionate men and women that will take it by force (Matt. 11:12).

Joshua is a type, a foreshadowing of Christ. Indeed, “Joshua” is the English translation of “Yeshua”, the same Hebrew name that is given to our Lord, and translated to us from the Greek as “Jesus.” Joshua’s task was to take the children of Israel into the Promised Land, and to possess it. *Mission accomplished.* This task of crossing the Jordan and possessing the Promised Land was also accomplished by Jesus, our Joshua, some 1400 years later at Calvary. By His death, Jesus took us from the realm of Egyptian slavery into the land of promise. This would come about in our experience—both individually and corporately—through a time of wandering as we have been in a process of being made ready to cross the mighty Jordan. Make no mistake—Jesus’ mission as the Galilean who walked the face of this earth some 2000 years ago has been accomplished! He has defeated the enemy and, as our forerunner, taken possession of the Kingdom of Heaven on our behalf; He has gone before us, and the victory is OURS! Jesus told His disciples, just before his death that He was going to prepare a place for them (John 14:2). This place of promise has been secured. Indeed, those of the

first fruits company—those who have surrendered to the absolute Lordship of Christ, who have counted the cost, and who have willingly taken His sufferings upon themselves—are even now battling the inhabitants of the land, taking possession one stronghold at a time, and occupying that place that He has gone to prepare for them. Take heart—the battle has already been won!

Make no mistake, there remain GIANTS in that land. Though there are territories yet unconquered, this does *not* mean that Christ, our Joshua, has failed at His mission! Those unconquered territories would require a lifestyle of unwavering holiness and fear of the Lord God of Israel if these new inhabitants were to live faithful and successful lives in the Promised Land. Joshua was no longer with them in body. Nevertheless, the same Spirit that was with Joshua and which went before the army of Israel was still with them.

We know, of course, from the account in the first chapter of Judges that the Israelites were *not* faithful to drive out the rest of the inhabitants, and that they failed to meet the conditions that the Lord their God had set forth. The consequences were made clear: “...*they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you*” (Judges 2:3). This failure to completely rout the enemy in their territory did, indeed, prove to be a snare unto them. The Old Testament narrative is remarkably candid in its account of Israel’s failure to drive out the nations, as well as in its telling of the many acts of disobedience wherein Israel failed to meet the conditions that the Lord set forth. This candor is for our benefit, as we can learn from Israel’s experience, in shadow and type, how critically important it is for us to understand and faithfully meet the conditions that God has established for us to *fully and completely* possess and inherit the Kingdom of Heaven—our Promised Land! Our part is simply to be faithful to that which the Spirit of the Lord is speaking forth within our being. God spoke a beautiful Word to a very special member of His bride—my wife!—one day several years ago when she was burdened down with the cares of life that tried to distract from God’s assignment for her: “***You take care of My business, and I will take care of your business!***” Let us consider “His business” as we look briefly, through spiritual eyes, at the requirements that the Lord laid down in Joshua 23.

Remain Courageous

“Be ye therefore very courageous...” (Joshua 23:6)

The Philistines and the other unconquered kingdoms would remain a threat and a bane to Israel’s well-being throughout its history as recorded in the Old Testament. They had an army that struck fear in the heart of Saul’s army, particularly one Goliath. Saul’s army was ready to give up. They were terrified with fear at the sight of this strong man. It took a humble shepherd boy—himself a type of Christ—to come forth in the power of Almighty God to slay this giant. David refused to wear Saul’s armor. His courage was not based on any ability that he had or on any armor that he wore. David understood the “therefore” in Joshua 23:6. His courage was based on the fact that God had promised to drive the enemy out from before them; *therefore* he was courageous. David *knew* the will of God in this matter and went forth in that confidence.

Do you find yourself overwhelmed by the power of the Philistines in your life? That Philistine, however he manifests himself, is enormous. I will not downplay his power, and neither should you. Your Goliath may be an addiction that you have never been able to overcome. He may come in the form of a relative, employer or business partner that brings to the surface the worst expression of your Adamic nature. It may be that you are facing overwhelming fears related to a health issue or financial circumstance. *In all of this, we are told to be courageous.* Our courage is not based upon changing circumstances that appear to offer a glimmer of hope—though praise God when He does begin to shift our circumstances. Nor is our courage grounded in any way in our ability to change or improve our circumstances. Our courage is based solely on the promise of God to go before us and expel the enemy.

We can even stare death in the face and have courage, because we are promised that not even death can separate us from the love of God (Romans 8:38-39). If you have ever had the incredible privilege of being in the presence of a dying person who has walked closely with the Lord, you will give testimony to the courage that is ours in the Lord. I will never forget sitting at the bedside of my father-in-law in his last hours. This was a man who tended to all of the cares of

life just as we all do, right up until his last days. But there was a transformation that I witnessed during the last few days of his life. I saw a glow in his face that I had never seen before. When his eyes were opened, it was as though he were looking unto another city, which he had now come to recognize was his true home. Indeed, I know with a certainty that he *was* looking unto that city. I saw no fear whatsoever, even though he was staring death in the face. This is the courage of which I am speaking, friend. It is a courage that is given us in sufficient measure to meet every circumstance that we face. It is a courage that comes with the presence of the Lord.

Remain Obedient to the Law

“Be ye therefore very courageous, to keep and do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses...” (Joshua 23:6).

Throughout the history of the Old Testament, obedience to the law was stressed. Promises were given to those who honored and obeyed the Lord’s commandments, while at the same time dire consequences would be the result if they failed to remain obedient.

For if ye shall diligently keep all these commandments which I command you, to do them, to love the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, and to cleave unto him; Then will the LORD drive out all these nations from before you, and ye shall possess greater nations and mightier than yourselves. Every place whereon the soles of your feet shall tread shall be yours: from the wilderness and Lebanon, from the river, the river Euphrates, even unto the uttermost sea shall your coast be. There shall no man be able to stand before you: for the LORD your God shall lay the fear of you and the dread of you upon all the land that ye shall tread upon, as he hath said unto you. Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you this day: And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this

day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known (Deuteronomy 11:22-28).

Israel was a special called out people. God had called them apart from the rest of the nations to be a peculiar people. The Hebrew word for “peculiar” is *cěgullah*, and carries the meaning of being a unique treasure or a valued property. Among all of the other peoples of the earth, Israel was unique in its relation to the heart of God. This did not mean that God did (and does) not love *all* of the peoples on the face of the earth; He created them all. But Israel was a chosen people that God had called apart to represent Him in the earth. This was a highly privileged position, but it also required a lifestyle of obedience to His commandments.

There is a *cěgullah* people today; they are a valued property and a unique treasure of the Lord. He has called them out to represent Him to all of the peoples and nations of the earth. God’s heart of love toward all of His creation is infinite, and He has determined that *all* will be reconciled unto Him (Colossians 1:20). How will this take place? His plan has not changed. He has called out a special people—a *cěgullah*—to represent Him on the earth today. Friends, we are that special people, His remnant called out from among all the peoples of the earth, to represent Christ, the very character of God, to the world today.

This privilege that is ours carries with it great responsibility to be obedient in all of our ways to His commandments. Please understand, this is not an obligation to the Old Covenant whereby we are under the yoke of *that* law. The Old Testament Israelites amply demonstrated that they were not able to keep it, and neither are we! Jesus said, *A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another (John 13:34)*. This “law of love” requires an obedience to the Holy Spirit within each of us who have been born anew of His Spirit. While there are those today who insist that we continue to be bound by the Mosaic law, such insistence is a blasphemy to the cross of Christ, and represents a falling away from grace, which is the power of the cross within each of us (Galatians 5:4). I will be even so bold to insist that our allegiance to the law of the Spirit will almost certainly require of us actions that, on the face of them, would seem to violate the letter of the law. I have written of this in [Law of](#)

[the Spirit—Higher than the Moral Law](#), and I refer you to that article for a more thorough discussion of this important understanding. I want only to emphasize here that God is calling out a people today—a remnant who hear His voice within them and who are committed to being obedient to *that* voice regardless of the cost.

Turn Not Aside, to the Right or to the Left

*“Be ye therefore very courageous, to keep and do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, **that ye turn not aside therefrom to the right hand or to the left...**”* (Joshua 23:6).

This condition speaks of vigilance and a singleness of vision. The Israelites had kingdoms yet to conquer in their newly-inhabited Promised Land. Anything that would distract them from this vision of driving out the remaining peoples in the land would only deter them from that place of complete victory and promised rest.

We must come to see that the distractions in our lives pose a major threat to our pressing forward in the things of God. These distractions come in many forms: We watch too much television. We get our feelings hurt, and dwell on petting the ego. We have circumstances that come up that seem so pressing. We let other people’s needs—particularly those close to us—dictate our own priorities far too often.

Indeed, the Lord has been dealing with me on all of these matters, and in some cases severely. Just this morning, before I sat down to write, I was preoccupied with distractions that were troubling my soul, and when I went before the Lord about this, He reminded me of the fact that the next topic I was to be addressing for this article was “turning not to the right or to the left.” His command to me, just minutes ago, was to get my mind off of these other things and to get writing! I didn’t feel like writing. I wasn’t in any mood to sit down and contemplate weighty Kingdom matters. I understand that God is trying to instill into me a firm knowing that my inspiration does not come from the realm of soul, or lofty emotional peaks. My inspiration comes from Him, and if I am obedient to turn

not to the right or the left, He will be faithful to inspire and I can write with the “pen of a ready writer” ...or in our day, “the keyboard of a ready writer.”

James tells us that “*a double minded man is unstable in all his ways*” (James 1:8). In the verses leading up to this proclamation, James exhorts his readers to count it all joy when they fall into divers temptations, that the trying of their faith works within them patience, and that patience leads unto their perfection. A true and appropriate translation of these verses might read “Count it all joy when you are encompassed with various trials, for these trials will produce in you a steadfastness and perseverance that will bring you to maturity and completion.” All of these matters that come up in our lives, which are so annoying and possibly troubling, are used by God to work in us perseverance.

Do not be distressed by the cares of life that would vie for your attention. Understand and believe that God is going before you in all of these matters, and that He allows these circumstances in our lives to test us and to teach us to press on with a singleness of vision. Let me use a rather imperfect illustration with which most of us should be able to identify. When you first learned to drive, you saw a world around you that, while you may have seen it before, now posed potential consequences, even a threat, to you successfully arriving at your destination. There were other cars approaching intersections. There were pedestrians waiting to cross a street. There were traffic lights ahead. In addition to all of this, you also could not help but be aware of a multitude of distractions: a yard sale taking place on your right; a husband and a wife arguing on their front lawn on your left; a pretty sunset in the west; and a rainbow in the east. There was a time, when you only knew what it was to be a passenger in the car, that you would be absorbed by all of the distractions. “Look mommy, see the pretty rainbow behind us!” Mommy would oblige by saying, “Isn’t it beautiful,” but in reality (if she was a good driver) her focus would not be on the rainbow in the rear view mirror. As a good driver, she had learned to tune out all of the distractions so as to single mindedly focus on those matters pertinent to her arriving successfully at her destination—the traffic lights, the pedestrians, the road conditions and the other traffic. As you became of age, and it was now your turn behind the wheel, you also learned, over the course of time, to tune out all

of these other distractions. This requires discipline, of course. If these distractions were not there, however, you would never develop the discipline of learning to ignore those things in your driving environment which are not relevant to your goal of successfully arriving at your destination.¹

Friends, this is the disciplined focus that our God is working in us through all of the distractions that would come our way. He is teaching us to, first, recognize them as distractions. We must learn to discern between that which is to be tended to for Kingdom purposes and for our own spiritual edification, and that which is but a distraction. Having learned to discern, the Lord would then have us learn how to take our focus off of the distractions, to extract ourselves from situations that hold us in bondage to the needs and demands of the soul realm, and to set our wheels on the highway to complete victory over all remaining enemies in our land.

Do Not Acknowledge the Gods of the Other Nations

“That ye come not among these nations...neither make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause to swear by them, neither serve them, nor bow yourselves unto them” (Joshua 23:7).

A god is that which we worship, that to which we give our allegiance. There were a number of gods to which peoples in the nations not yet driven out of Israel’s Promised Land gave their allegiance. Chief among these was Baal, who was considered the supreme god among the Canaanites. Baal was a fertility god and it was believed that his actions were responsible for the earth bearing crops and for women bearing children. He was the god above all other gods, which is why Elijah’s successful challenge to him at Mount Carmel was so significant. Ashtoreth was a companion, fertility goddess to Baal in the Canaanite pantheon of gods. Solomon was lured into Ashtoreth worship by some of his foreign wives. Still another god of the surrounding nations was Dagon, a god of the Philistines. It is said that the statue of Dagon, who was the god of water and of grain, had the body of a fish and the head of a human. You might remember that when the Philistines captured the ark of the covenant, they placed it in the temple of Dagon. It was also in the temple of Dagon that Samson met his doom. Two other

gods of significance in Israel's milieu were Chemosh, a god of war, and Molech. These were worshipped by the Moabites and Ammonites respectively, and both required some of the most brutal acts of human sacrifice imaginable. Solomon also gave allegiance to these gods by erecting high places for them. These are but some of the most significant gods among many others that Israel found in the new environment that was its inheritance.

I would contend that while these gods are not officially worshipped in the religious centers surrounding you who are reading these pages, the spirit of these gods is still very much alive in our world today. We must be aware of them and of the subtle but powerful influence that they wield. I am not speaking here of the objects of worship of foreigners entering our borders. Nor am I referring to some of the efforts by feminists and others to feminize God through the worship of Diana, Sophia, etc. I cannot support such efforts, but these are not the gods that pose the most significant challenges to our world today. The challenges we face are the gods of Baal, Ashtoreth, Dagon, Chemosh and Molech in all of their various forms today that would vie for our worship and allegiance. I will be so bold as to suggest that the power that these gods had over the ancient Israelites and the power that they have over us today is directly proportional to our *love of self*. For example, Baal was the supreme god of the Canaanites, responsible for their overall well-being. Baal, along with Ashtoreth, were fertility gods, and pleasing these gods meant favor at harvest and child-bearing time. The gods of Baal and Ashtoreth are very much alive in our world today, though they come with different names.

(I have some things to say now that may be regarded by many of you as outside the bounds of what is appropriate in a "spiritual" writing of this nature. These are things, however, that I strongly believe have impacted the spiritual condition of vast numbers of conscientious followers of Christ in a most insidious way. I am, for this reason, compelled to speak on these matters.)

One of the names that we have substituted for Baal today is *nationalism*. I do not oppose loyalty to one's country by any means, but when that loyalty supersedes loyalty to God almighty, it has become idolatry of a false god. There is a phrase

“God and country,” commonly used, especially among political conservatives, in the United States today. My observation, however, tells me that virtually no one using this phrase is extolling an unwavering commitment to the God of the universe Who is indwelling their being. They are, instead, extolling a patriotism of country above all else, and to most who use this phrase, God and country means that loyalty to country *is* loyalty to God, and that *disloyalty* to country in any expression is, by definition, treachery against God Himself. If one is unpatriotic, he or she is regarded by these flag-bearing zealots to be unfit for the Kingdom of God. This is Baal worship, dear friends, and it is a far greater threat to our moving forward in the Kingdom of God than is Islam, feminism or any other “ism” on the landscape today. Remember, Baal was the supreme god of the Canaanites, worshipped above all other gods. We find Baal taking the form of the Caesars in the Roman Empire; and of the kings in the various monarchies down through history. While we, in America and other democracies throughout the world, have rejected such loyalty to a monarch, the vast majority of our citizens nevertheless maintain an allegiance to the nation-state of our birth or residence above all other loyalties—even above our allegiance to Christ if that allegiance requires any action that might be regarded as disloyal to country. That is why I say that this spirit of nationalism is a spirit of Baal.²

The spirit of Baal masquerades in other forms as well. I will remind you that Baal and Ashtoreth were worshipped as fertility gods and were responsible for successful harvests. Agriculture was the primary economic endeavor in that day and so it was important to give homage to these fertility gods so that they would be blessed financially. Corresponding to our worship of country, Americans (as well as citizens of many other countries) bow to the god of capitalism. Political conservatives in particular tend to esteem a capitalist economic system in a manner that is idolatrous. I know that I will probably alienate some readers when I declare with every fiber of my being that there is nothing godly inherent in capitalism. In fact, I think the case can be made that capitalism, left unchecked, can be one of the most brutal, immoral economic systems known to man. I had a very close friend (now deceased) who was an economist, trained in the von Mises economic tradition; (von Mises is an extremely conservative capitalist think tank

headquartered at Auburn University in Alabama). He argued eloquently the godly virtues of capitalism. Sometime after the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union and the breakup of that union into independent nation states, my friend had the opportunity to travel to Russia to teach economics. He went with his prepared notes to teach the virtues of capitalism. When he arrived there, he discovered that capitalism had reached Russia long before he arrived. He discovered capitalism in its most pure, unchecked form, and he was horrified. People were being exploited mercilessly by the avarice of greedy entrepreneurs who had no compassion whatsoever on their countrymen who were suffering because of their corruption. There seemed to be no moral compass whatsoever guiding the economy of Russia at that time. When my friend came back he informed me that he had to completely rewrite his lectures to emphasize the importance of a godly moral foundation for their economic endeavors. Capitalism must be kept in check, he said, by an allegiance to One higher than an economic system. I would hastily add that dogmatic loyalty to communism, socialism or any other economic system is also giving allegiance to the spirit of Baal; it is looking to a god of the harvest—an allegiance to a particular type of economy—to fulfill the needs and desires of self.

Lest one think that I am some flaming liberal, let me put your mind to rest. The god of Baal not only manifests itself in nationalism or in allegiance to an economic system, but it also seduces us through undue dependence on government. Most developed nations throughout the world today have grown the size of their governments because the people have come to rely on their governments to insure their well-being. We are afraid to speak out against our government, just as the Canaanites of old feared offending Baal, because we have put our government with all of its various agencies in a wrongful place in our lives, and because of this, in a wrongful place in our *hearts*. When we become this dependent, we become severely limited in our capacity to walk by faith in God and God alone because of the financial, political, social or even physical consequences that might ensue if the dictates of our faith were to upset the Baal government that we have come to depend upon for our well-being—the well-being of *self*.

The well-being of self is also at the root of our worship of Ashtoreth, Dagon, Chemoth and Molech. These, too, were gods who, when worshipped, were believed to bring wealth, prosperity and well-being. But these demands were costly; some of the most brutal forms of child sacrifice were performed as rites of worship to these gods, particularly Chemoth and Molech. I have never been inclined to write on the evils of abortion, and I am not intending to begin here. (Anti-abortionists have themselves been far too brutal in their treatment of young mothers-to-be who find themselves in horrific situations and who must make difficult decisions which, for many, are regretted years later.) I do write here, however, regarding a *spirit* which I see on the ascendancy throughout much of the world—especially the developed world—which would encourage abortion, child neglect, and other horrifying forms of child (and elder) sacrifice. These sacrifices are far more pervasive than abortion statistics would suggest; they also include such tragedies as giving birth to deformed or addicted infants by alcohol- and drug-addicted mothers, and the abandonment of highly dependent and vulnerable children and elderly to inferior care or no care at all. These tragedies are often (though not always) the result of a culture of hedonism which places the felt needs and even pleasures of self above the needs and well-being of the most vulnerable and defenseless among us. Whether the lifestyle resulting in the neglect of the defenseless be one of drug addiction or of pursuing a high paying career at the expense of meeting the needs of those who are dependent upon our care, when the hedonistic spirit of Chemoth or Molech is driving it, those caught in the clutches of these lifestyles are willing to make all manner of sacrifices, which, but for divine intervention, violently deny the very image of God in those sacrificed.

There is much more that could be explored regarding the gods that occupy our land of promise today. This is not a political issue. It is not a matter of conservatives *or* liberals having the moral high ground. Neither is it a matter of attempting to change the political, cultural, economic, or normative climate of a society. Oh dear reader, ***this is a matter of absolute and unbending allegiance to the Most High God who has taken up residence within each of us.*** It is a matter of allowing Him to reconcile and subdue all that is of the old Adam within us, to

set our face as flint to that which He has called us, turning neither to the right nor to the left. As this spiritual shift takes place within us, we will, to be sure, inevitably find our political, social, cultural and economic leanings shifting regarding this issue and that. More importantly, however, we will find these leanings to be waning in their importance, as we take our cues less from these worldly external reference points and more and more from the inner God-compass within us. “And the things on earth will grow strangely dim, in the Light of His glory and grace!” is a chorus of a familiar hymn. As this takes place, we truly can proclaim that we do *not* acknowledge or bow down to the gods of the nations.

Do not Inter-marry with the Peoples of the Nations

“Else if ye do in any wise go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, even these that remain among you, and shall make marriages with them, and go in unto them, and they to you: Know for a certainty that the LORD your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you” (Joshua 23:12-13).

This condition has to do with our relationships with those around us. Our faithfulness to God is powerfully influenced by the relationships and associations that we have. Ask any parent of a teenager who has travelled the road of juvenile delinquency if they think that the associations we keep are significant predictors of the actions we will eventually take, and you will get a lecture that will leave no doubt in your mind on this matter! These ungodly relationships can have such a devastating effect if not repented of, that they can separate a child from his or her parents for the rest of their lives. God in His wisdom is setting forth here a condition that is absolutely essential if Israel is to be able to honor the previous condition that the Lord set down of acknowledging no other gods, and to maintain an undivided heart of devotion to Him.

Even a casual reading of the historical books of the Old Testament clearly reveals a blatant disregard for this condition that the Lord laid down for His going before

to rout out the nations. Especially by the time that we get to the establishment of the monarchy in Israel, we find intermarriage with the surrounding nations commonplace. We also witness very sobering consequences for God's chosen people. They began to worship the gods of those with whom they intermarried. They complied with the rites and demands of those foreign gods. The Hebrew people stooped to engaging in some horrific practices, such as sacrificing their own children upon the altars of these gods. The result of all of this was that Israel's heart was turned from the Lord their God to the gods of the nations. They were severely compromised in their devotion to God Almighty.

The result of this compromise was devastating for the nation of Israel. They would later become divided into two nations—a northern kingdom and a southern kingdom. Their consciences became increasingly seared as they fell more deeply into the clutches of these foreign peoples and their practices. The anger of the Lord was stirred to such an extent that he proclaims through His prophet Jeremiah that He has given Israel (the northern kingdom) a bill of divorce (Jeremiah 3:6-8). The result was that northern Israel was taken captive by the Assyrians, never to come together as a nation again. Jeremiah was a prophet to the southern kingdom of Judah, and was God's mouthpiece to warn Judah of what was in store for them if they followed the same path. Judah did not repent and it, too, was taken into captivity, not by the Assyrians but by the Babylonians, where they remained in exile for 70 years. Indeed, we see something of the Lord's compassionate heart when he urges Judah to proclaim His word through Jeremiah to backsliding Israel that if she repents, He will return unto her (Jeremiah 3:12).

Israel's whoredom with the gods of the peoples around them was a direct result of their taking wives from these nations, directly in violation of God's command not to do so. God knew the power that these relationships would have over these people which is why He commanded that they remain separate and undefiled by the surrounding nations. As we understand Israel's conundrum through spiritual eyes we will understand that this command to remain separate and to not intermarry with the surrounding peoples applies to us today just as it did to our spiritual forefathers of ancient Israel. This intermarrying can be manifest in many

ways and it would behoove us to be alert to the subtle ways in which we might be seduced into these relationships.

We can readily see, of course, one application of this condition for the taking of the Kingdom of Heaven. I am speaking here of not marrying unbelievers or even of becoming emotionally entangled with unbelievers in a way that is likely to lead to marriage. We are clearly told not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers (2 Corinthians 6:14). While it is not clear from either the text or the context that this is what Paul was referring to here, we can readily understand how such unholy matrimonial bonds will severely compromise the Kingdom agenda that God has for those whom He has called His *cěgullah*. I am of great certainty that Paul's admonition extends far beyond the marriage bed. We are not to be unequally yoked in *any* area of our lives because such bonds will compromise us. It is critical that we be very careful as to whom we align ourselves with in business partnerships, in civic commitments, and in other endeavors that involve great investment of our time, resources and energy. I am not suggesting here that we completely separate ourselves from the world, similar to the stance that Old Order Amish and other groups have historically taken. We are, indeed, in the world. But friend, we are not *of* the world, and the way to maintain a purity of heart is to not allow ourselves to become entangled in relationships that would compromise that purity. I must warn you, dear fellow traveler, that this is a lonely road if we are to be true to this condition in our day, age and culture.

You may already be involved in such entanglements, and the Lord may be calling you to come apart from those relationships. I recall so clearly a most painful separation that I had to make in the 1990's. I had been asked to serve as the very first president of a newly established Habitat for Humanity chapter in the county in which I lived. I loved the heart of this organization and of the local group of people who came together across race and class lines to "do unto the least of these," and I was incredibly honored to serve in this way. This building of community, I believed then as I do now, is close to the heart of God. There came a time when I knew that it was time to step down as president. After a brief term as president by a dear brother in the Lord, the local chapter decided to elect into office a very prominent individual in the community who had many connections

in the political and business world. Very quickly the atmosphere changed. No longer was there much talk about the importance of building community, or serving the least of these with the heart of Christ. It was now about building *houses*, and building as many of them as we could. It was about putting that local chapter “on the map.” It was about getting people into houses so that there could be an income stream to build more houses. I despaired over this, desperately doing what I could to recover something that we had lost. It was then that a very godly woman got me aside and looked me in the eyes and said, “Chuck, I think you need to pray about whether God would have you let Habitat go.” There was a release within me right then. I knew that I needed to do this, first, because I had made an idol out of Habitat for Humanity and God needed to remove that idol. I also recognize that I needed to do it because I would have been stuck in a mentality of “outer court ministry,”³ whereas I now understand that God was calling me into something much deeper in Him and in His Kingdom agenda.

There may be other entanglements that the Lord is pressing upon you to release. Some of you may have unholy bonds with your growing up family. I have had opportunity to see close up the dysfunctional dynamics of unhealthy families that keep their members in a perpetual state of anxiety and distraction. Often these are families with a parent or child who is an alcoholic or addicted to other drugs. There develops in these families—or in one or more members of these families—a sick expectation that they must be the one to save or protect the dysfunctional member. Psychologists call this “enabling,” and friend, you are not called to be an enabler. Separate yourself from this role, even if it means experiencing the wrath of that individual or even of other members of your family. Do not allow such an entanglement deter you from that which God has called you.

There is one other type of “intermarriage” that I want to briefly address. I am speaking here regarding the deep soul tie that many of us have to organized religion. I have addressed the problematic nature of organized religion in [Bureaucrurch](#) and of our identity as ones who have been called out of this system in [Ecclesia: Taking Back our Identity](#). Others who are linked to this website have also addressed this issue at length, and books have been written

about it, and for this reason it is not my intent to belabor it here. I would only point out that this system, which purports to be “The Church,” demands an allegiance that, at the end of the day, competes with our allegiance to Christ. Oh yes, the preacher will tell you that he is all about leading you to Christ; or that the purpose of the church is to disciple you and nurture within you a greater devotion to Christ. I would urge you to examine the fruit of this by spending some time with those who have been trained in these various traditions of men. Talk to the pastors or to the elders. Talk to those who have spent years in those congregations. After a while you will pick up on their loyalty and devotion to their denomination, to their doctrine and theology, and even to their polity or ecclesiastical form. Engage them about your passionate love and devotion to Christ, your bridegroom and the lover of your soul, and you will typically experience an awkward silence in response. I have found that greater purity of the gospel and undivided loyalty and passion for Christ is much more likely to be found in the new convert before he or she has had time to be indoctrinated into the religious system that has the audacity to call itself “the church.”

I am confident that those whom Christ has called out as His *ecclesia* will eventually hear this call to “come out of her, my people” (Revelation 18:4). There is another call, however, to those who have already heeded the call to “come out from among them and be ye separate” (2 Corinthians 6:17), and that is to empty ourselves of the doctrines and beliefs that we have carried over from our time in the religious system. As one has said, “It is one thing to get out of Babylon. It is quite another to get Babylon out of you.” This requires a repentance—a *metanoia*—that involves a radical revolution in our thinking as the Holy Spirit unfolds truths that have been hidden from us by the religious establishment that have, until now, been our primary source of understanding. As the Holy Spirit does this work, our eyes will be open to profound truths that will require us to abandon and even renounce beliefs that we once held dear. This is the separation *within* that must accompany the external physical separation from the religious system.

Conditions for Conquering the Remaining Territory: Summary

God has promised to go before us, to drive out the occupants of the land promised to those who overcome, so that we will indeed inherit and possess the Kingdom of Heaven. It was promised to the Israelites of old and it is promised to us: *“But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even for ever and ever”* (Daniel 7:18). This is God’s promise and He will do it! There are, however conditions that, when met, release the Lord to take out these enemy forces. All of these conditions speak to our undivided loyalty to Him who has captivated our hearts. When we lose courage; when we become distracted by that which is on the right or left; when our ears are dulled to the law of the Spirit as it is spoken within; when our allegiances are turned to other things such as financial prosperity or good health; and when we entangle ourselves in alliances that would turn our hearts from Christ, our first love—God cannot go before us and expel the enemy. He cannot expel the enemy because when we do these things, we are embracing the enemy! I pray that we can see that these conditions are not some legalistic requirement to appease an angry God so that He will move on our behalf. Oh no, dear friend! These are conditions that remove chains that bind us to the slave master of *self*. When met, they open us up to a world of freedom, and unlimited riches in Christ Jesus! They open us up to the conquering of every enemy, and to a life of victorious living! They open us up to our full inheritance, which is the Kingdom of Heaven!

Apportioning the Land

Upon the initial defeat of the 31 kingdoms that occupied Israel’s Promised Land, it became necessary to divide the inheritance among the nine and one-half tribes who were its new occupants. (Remember, two and one-half tribes made the decision to remain east of the Jordan in territory that was not included in the Promised Land.) It is noteworthy that when God authorized the dividing up of the land of Canaan among the nine and one-half tribes of Israel, He did not specify the boundaries for each tribe (as he did so specify for the overall boundaries of the Promised Land). Rather, he instructed Moses to appoint Eleazar and Joshua, along with a representative from each of the tribes, to define each of the tribes’

boundaries (Numbers 34:17). This represents a type of administration of the Kingdom of Israel. The choice of Eleazar and Joshua to define the borders is significant, because Eleazar represents the priestly class and Joshua the kingly class. (Israel had not yet established a monarchy, but Joshua was in the position of leadership that the monarchy represented.) As Israel became more established in the land of Canaan, they began to do evil in the sight of the Lord by intermarrying with the nations around them and worshipping their gods. Israel would be taken into captivity and, responding to their cry for mercy, God raised up a succession of thirteen judges who had authority to deliver them. These judges would lead the nation into war, settle disputes, and make decisions that greatly affected God's people. God also raised up prophets during this time—men who were undivided in their devotion to God—who could hear God's voice clearly and speak it forth with an anointed conviction. The prophets would, of course, take on an even more critical role after the monarchy was established, when Israel was falling into gross disobedience. These two offices—that of the judge (and later the king) and the prophet—were intended to speak forth and implement the word of the Lord to the people. These prophets and judges represented an extension of the leadership that Joshua provided (albeit not always as successfully) during the initial conquest.

The priests were of the tribe of Levi, and, as they did from the time of Moses, performed a dual role. The priest was the intermediary between God and His people. As such, the priest would represent the needs of the people before God and would offer up sacrifices on the people's behalf, as God had instructed. The second part of the priest's role was to represent God to the people. It was the priest who would call the people together for the reading of the law. J. Preston Eby describes this dual role this way:

"... the priest always draws nigh and ministers in TWO DIRECTIONS - drawing nigh to God on behalf of the people and drawing nigh to the people on behalf of God. The priest stands and ministers unto the Lord on behalf of the people while, on the other hand, he ministers unto the people on behalf of the Lord. The ministry of the priest is an intermediate or go-between ministry. He reaches out with one hand

and takes hold of God; he reaches out with the other hand and takes hold of humanity; and he brings the two together by virtue of his priestly ministration” (Eby, The Royal Priesthood, n.d., Book 1, p. 9)

And so it was that the Lord God would commune with His people through the ministry of the priests. It was not enough, in the economy of God, to simply issue directives and establish rulership and authority. God wanted *relationship* with His people and He established the priesthood from the days of Moses to do this.

Can we see here that by appointing Joshua (the warrior leader) and Eleazar (the priest) to work with the representatives from each tribe to apportion the land, God was establishing an order whereby His Kingdom is being administered by kings and priests unto God. The apportioning of the land has to do with *administration* of the Kingdom of God. Unlike Israel of old, God’s kings and priests today are not of a natural lineage. Joshua and Eleazar are but types of a spiritual authority that God has established for the administration of His Kingdom. Indeed, in Christ we find the pattern for both the kingly and priestly authority. His kingly authority was fully realized only after He came to planet earth to serve as our priest. As our high priest, he laid down His very life that we might have the life of God. All the while, He knew that all authority in heaven and earth was His. His submission to the Father led him to a criminal’s cross, only to be resurrected, and now ascended to the heavenlies where He sits in a place of authority on the right hand of the Father. The book of Revelation reveals our Lord, not as a babe in a manger or a suffering servant, but as one who rules and reigns.

Remember, Jesus is the *pattern* Son. This means that He has established the pattern for others to follow. Even now, God is raising up priests and kings for purpose of the administration of His Kingdom. These are men and women who have been separated unto God, who have surrendered themselves to the refining fires of purification and who are being made into the very image of God. These kings- and priests-in-process are almost surely not to be found in the leadership ranks of churches and other ministries. Don’t expect to find them there. They do not aspire to such positions. These are a people who have been put on a shelf, humbled before the Lord, so that all self-ambition within them is consumed by

Fire. Rather than standing tall behind the pulpits of great ministries, they are more likely to be found caring for an ailing friend; speaking a word of divine hope to a fellow inmate at a maximum security prison; or maybe just changing the diaper of an infant. The point I wish to make here is that the kings/priests that God is raising up—those whom He is preparing to administer His Kingdom—are in this hour largely hidden, as they are being trained for their *priestly* role. They will remain hidden until God has completed His work in them. Their role in the Kingdom is monumental. It will be these specially prepared ones who are qualified to administer the grace and judgment of God Himself because they have taken on His very character. He can now trust them in this task. As the character of Christ becomes fully formed in them, His will becomes their will, and His desires become their desires. They are becoming qualified to speak forth on behalf of God, even as Joshua did when he ordered the sun and the moon to stand still. These, who following after the pattern of the “Older Brother” and having learned to submit to the will of the Father, will now, by their very words, speak forth life and death, loosing and binding, over those things that have, until now, stubbornly occupied their land of promised destiny. *These* are the priests and kings represented by Eleazar and Joshua! ⁴

A New Lifestyle

Long before the Israelites came close to Jordan’s banks, God spoke to Moses something concerning the lifestyle that they were about to come into upon entering the Promised Land. He tells Moses, in the eleventh chapter of Deuteronomy, that they would not live as they did in Egypt. God’s word to Moses speaks of an entirely new way of living from that which they experienced in Egypt, albeit one that He had been preparing them for throughout their wilderness journey:

“So it shall be, when the LORD your God brings you into the land of which He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give you large and beautiful cities which you did not build, “houses full of all good things, which you did not fill, hewn-out wells which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant—when you

have eaten and are full— “then beware, lest you forget the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage...Therefore you shall keep every commandment which I command you today, that you may be strong, and go in and possess the land which you cross over to possess, and that you may prolong your days in the land which the Lord swore to give your fathers, to them and their descendants, ‘a land flowing with milk and honey.’ For the land which you go to possess is not like the land of Egypt from which you have come, where you sowed your seed and watered it by foot, as a vegetable garden; but the land which you cross over to possess is a land of hills and valleys, which drinks water from the rain of heaven, a land for which the Lord your God cares; the eyes of the Lord your God are always on it, from the beginning of the year to the very end of the year (Deuteronomy 6:10-12; 11:8-12; NKJV).

Egypt was a land of hard labor. The Israelites were enslaved to the rule of the Pharaoh and were required to do backbreaking work. They learned there that buildings were going to be made only if they made the bricks; and that crops were going to grow only if they planted and watered them. Nothing was going to be accomplished in that land without the toil of their labor. But God was now bringing them into a new land, “which drinks from the water of the rain of heaven.” This was a land with wells already dug, vineyards and olive trees already planted, and houses and cities already built—for the most part by the hand of their enemies who have been occupying the land! The watering of their crops was no longer dependent upon the man-made irrigation systems that they toiled to create and tend in Egypt, but in this land of promise, God would water and care for their crop; and the scripture says, *“the eyes of the Lord your God are always on it, from the beginning of the year to the very end of the year.”*

This was a new way of living! Now, rather than depending on the sweat of their own labor and the wisdom of their own minds, they were totally dependent on God alone to water their soil and to ripen their crops. The wilderness provided an apprenticeship period to learn this new way of life, as the Lord provided water

from the rock, manna from heaven that they were to gather on a daily basis, and even quail for meat. Despite the amazing supernatural provision that they experienced, the Israelites complained about the monotony of their diet! Little did they know that this was but a foretaste of the dependency upon God for the good things that He had in store for them in the Promised Land. But it was necessary for them to learn to live in this dependence in the wilderness, because when they reached the Promised Land they would face not only physical needs for food and water, but they would encounter major enemies that would also require the Lord their God to go before them.

Oh how long we have lived in Egypt and learned the ways of Egyptian bondage! God has been taking us through our own wilderness as He has been preparing us for that which He has in store for us in the Promised Land. He has been stripping us of all of that in ourselves which we have learned to trust and depend upon to live in the world and slavery of which we have so long been a part. Some of us have had the plug pulled on all of our financial schemes; others have had their good reputations in the community tarnished; still others have lost their marriages. Many of us have come out of religious institutions which have burdened us with all manner of laws and expectations until we literally burned out trying to meet these demands. We have been told that God's work is dependent upon our money and our giving, and many profiteers have been willing to fleece the poorest of their flocks by laying guilt trips upon them followed by hollow promises of great material wealth if they respond to these fundraising schemes. It is true that we are called to partner with God in His great Kingdom endeavor, but our partnership requires only fidelity to the Holy Spirit within us as we respond to His loving call. As Christine Beadsworth has so beautifully put it, *"It is not the lack of money that hampers the extension of the Kingdom, but the lack of surrendered vessels who are willing to say, 'I will go.' Hirelings require gold and silver in order to function in a position of responsibility. A bond servant serves out of love for the master." True shepherds tend the flock and bar the gateway of the sheepfold with their own bodies, just as Jesus said, 'I am the door of the sheep.'"* (Beadsworth, 2017; p. 143).

The religious institution has always depended upon Egyptian-style slavery to maintain its dominant position and tall steeples on the main streets and suburban mega-complexes throughout the communities of our land. Its pharaohs have fine-tuned their disciplinary actions when the people are not producing enough “bricks.” God is saying to these pharaohs “Let my people go!” just as He did in the days of Moses. If you are one of those “pharaohs” who have by God’s sovereign hand and purpose come across this article (I know there won’t be many, as this is not written primarily to church leaders), and God has been speaking to you through a “Moses” in your congregation—irritating though they may seem to you—to “let His people go,” I would caution you to listen reverently to that message. These that may seem like troublemakers to you are very often messengers sent by God urging you to free His people to worship Him in Spirit and in Truth rather than in the dictates of the organizational demands of the system over which you rule. Choosing to be like the Pharaoh of old who continued to harden his heart, and demand even more of these who speak forth Moses’ call to free His people (or worse yet, vilify them before the rest of your congregation) is to open yourself and your congregation to God’s wrath. Pharaoh of old didn’t escape this wrath and neither will you.

God is also tenderly but firmly calling to those caught in this enslavement to religious institutions, “Come out of her, my people.” This will not be a mass exodus in response to a directive from some charismatic leader. As was Joshua, Moses was a type of Christ, and the call of our Lord in this new day of the Spirit is deeply personal, largely hidden from the masses and certainly hidden from the pharaoh’s of the religious monolith under which they have served. They are hearing the call, one by one, to come out. They are usually misunderstood and often vilified. But their hearts are set on obedience to their Lord. A wilderness awaits them, as they are stripped of all of the positive reinforcement that would authenticate their own “goodness.” It is, indeed, a call to a radically new lifestyle.

Whichever wilderness path that God has taken you, it has been tailor-fitted to complete God’s preparatory work for your entry into and possession of your place of destiny. He is bringing you to a place where you are dependent upon *none* of your own resources, where you come to recognize your total dependence upon

*His provision—financial, social, physical, emotional, mental and spiritual. He is watering our land with the rain of heaven, and His eyes are upon it from the morning dawn to the setting sun. Our God has been training us to walk totally by His Spirit, moving only when He says move and speaking only that which He puts within our mouths to speak. This is a totally new way of living. For most of us, this will require a major shift in our understanding of God, His *ecclesia*, and who we are in His great Kingdom agenda. This paradigm shift is nothing short of the new wineskin that is necessary to contain the new wine that God is even now beginning to pour forth.*

A Call to Rest in His Covenant

I believe that if we were to identify a dominant theme throughout the narrative related to the establishment of the Israelites in their land of promise, it would be that they are to rest in the adequacy of their God who has called them out of Egypt and unto Himself as a peculiar people. He has promised to go before them in battle. He has promised to send the rains, and to produce the crops. Their only responsibility is to voluntarily enter into the covenant that He was establishing with them, and to be obedient to the terms of that covenant. We know, of course, that they were not faithful to God's covenant with them, and they endured much severe corrective judgment for their unfaithfulness.

Our call is to enter into that same rest:

*Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it. For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said: **“So I swore in My wrath, ‘They shall not enter My rest,’”** although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: **“And God rested on the seventh day from all His works”**; and again in this place: **“They shall not enter My rest.”** Since therefore it remains that some must enter it, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter*

because of disobedience, again He designates a certain day, saying in David, "Today," after such a long time, as it has been said: "Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts." For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day. There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His. Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience. (Hebrews 4:1-11; NKJV).

Entering into God's rest is a *command*, not an option! We enter into this rest with *diligence* (v. 11). The King James renders it that we *labor* to enter this rest. This seems like a contradiction at first glance, but the writer to the Hebrews understands clearly that this is not a lifestyle that is readily embraced by the natural man. It is totally counter-intuitive to our carnal minds. We are so accustomed to living as though our destiny in life depends entirely upon *our* efforts, skills, and giftings. We subscribe to the credo echoed by John Kennedy in his closing statement of his inaugural address in 1961, "*let us go forth to lead the land we love, asking His blessing and His help, but knowing that here on earth God's work must truly be our own.*" I have always admired John Kennedy, but I must respectfully disagree with this assertion. Friends, we are on *God's* mission, and we are but the vessels through whom *He* accomplishes His work. Our capacity to be a faithful vessel is directly proportional to the extent to which we can lay down *our* efforts and rest in Him.

Entering into that rest will require diligence (labor), because it is nothing short of a radical repentance—a *metanoia*, paradigm shift—of old ways of thinking about the Kingdom of God and our role in it. We must learn, as my wife did that *if we take care of His business, He will take care of our business*. You see, "taking care of His business" is *our* part of the covenant. Laboring to enter into His rest does not mean that we play tiddly winks all day long, and expect Him to bless us with all material and spiritual blessing. Neither does it mean that we feverishly attempt to alleviate all the evils in the world, believing that if we don't do something the masses of humanity are destined for unnecessary suffering; or

that if we don't wear out our shoe leather passing out gospel tracts, the great bulk of the human race is destined for an eternal hell. Entering into His rest means, rather, that we come into alignment with His Kingdom purposes in all of our thoughts and actions and *then*, as Jesus said, "all these things shall be added unto you." It requires our willing labor to exercise our spirit man in place of the carnal mind and take captive to the obedience of Christ all other thoughts that exalt itself above the knowledge of Christ within us, the hope of glory, who leads us by His Spirit. Our part of the covenant, as one faithful friend advised me, is *to pray, to listen, and then do whatever comes out of your praying.*

We have identified the conditions that God set forth as part of His covenant with Israel that He would go before them in battle; and we have considered the spiritual significance of these conditions for us as we enter, possess and occupy the Kingdom of God, that land of promise that God has destined for us. We have reflected on the new lifestyle that is part and parcel of living in this new land. The simple fact is, the old lifestyle to which we are so accustomed is totally incompatible with Promised Land living! Let us humbly go before the Lord and beseech him to identify all of the old ways of Egypt that remain within us so that in every situation and opportunity His will is done and His Kingdom comes! Let us victoriously move forth in the reality of the land that He has taken possession of in us...on our "earth"... and to impose the Kingdom, or the very will of the Father "as it is in Heaven." Let us repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand!

¹ I am not suggesting, of course, that a good driver cannot take note of the environment around them when they drive. What a great gift it is to take a drive in the country side and enjoy the beauty of God's creation! The point that I am making here is that we learn to prioritize our focus. One of the first principles that I was taught when learning to drive a motorcycle is that we tend to steer the bike in the direction that we are looking. (This applies to cars too—I just didn't hear about it until I started to drive a motorcycle.) Hence, we learn that while we can enjoy the beauty of the landscape out of the corners of our eyes or with an occasional glance, we cannot allow these breathtaking views to be our focus when we are in the driver's seat. The intensity of our gaze must be on the road ahead!

² It is, of course, possible to be patriotic and not be guilty of Baal worship. Just about every true follower of Christ that I know, those who have truly abandoned all for the cause of Christ in their lives, are also strongly patriotic to their country of citizenship. This patriotism, however, does not trump their loyalty to Christ. I am speaking here, rather, of a spirit which I have

observed in our day which has raised loyalty to country to such a place that it competes with one's loyalty to Christ, and with their obedience to their calling in Christ. I recall, for example, during the Viet Nam war, some of my friends registered as conscientious objectors. They were not part of any religious group, such as the Mennonites or Amish, who formally opposed war. They were simply convicted within themselves that it was wrong to go to war, particularly this war. They were regarded as traitors, and their personal convictions were mocked. I am perfectly aware that there were many who used this label simply because they were cowards. I would humbly suggest, however, that the very predisposition on the part of vast numbers of citizens to demean another's stand of conscience when it challenges the demands and expectations of a civil government is evidence of making our nation-state the object of Baal worship.

³ I use the term "outer court ministry" to refer generally to ministering to the physical, social and other natural needs of people. This is in contrast to an inner court ministry, which is usually understood as a ministry to the Lord Himself. This distinction is taken from the division of the temple into the outer court, accessible to all of the people and where they could be ministered unto; the holy place, entered into only by priests carrying the sacrifices of the people and conducting ritual worship unto the Lord; and the very inner Holy of Holies wherein only the High Priest would enter, only once each year, to minister directly unto the Lord.

⁴ The Aaronic priesthood is a shadow and type of the spiritual priesthood that God is raising in our day. Much can be learned of this preparation process by studying carefully—with spiritual eyes—God's preparation of His Kings and Priests among the Israelite nation. I would strongly encourage the reader to prayerfully read the series by J. Preston Eby entitled [The Royal Priesthood](#). It is available in [audio](#) form on this website as well.

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