

June 19, 2011

REMEMBERING HOW AND WHY

Joshua 4: 20-24

Remember last time we looked at Remembering WHEN you got HERE. It was PARTICULAR (when God magnified Christ in our sight). It was LIFE CHANGING. It was SPECIFIC (when God õshut us upö to Christ).

Today we will continue REMEMBERING. Our lesson is just two points:

1. Remembering HOW you GOT here.
2. Remembering WHY you ARE here.

Look at Joshua 4: 20, **“And those twelve stones, which they took out of Jordan, did Joshua pitch in Gilgal.”**

Joshua took the twelve stones gathered by the twelve representatives of each tribe of Israel and made a memorial of this day. He made a REMINDER of this event. Israel crossed over the Jordan on õdry landö. They entered into the Promised Land. They began to take possession of their (rightful) inheritance.

Look at Joshua 4: 21, **“And he spake unto the children of Israel, saying, When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What *mean* these stones?”**

The memorial of these stones was designed to REMIND them and PROVOKE others to ask. What are these stones? Why are they here? Why are there twelve? Where did they come from? Israel’s entry into the Land of Promise was nothing short of õmiraculousö. These stones were to be a REMINDER to them of what God had done through Joshua to bring them into this land (their efforts *totally* EXCLUDED).

Look at Joshua 4: 22-23, **“Then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land.**

23 For the LORD your God dried up the waters of Jordan from before you, until ye were passed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red sea, which he dried up from before us, until we were gone over.”

In verse 23 Joshua connects two separate (but not unrelated) events in Israel's history. Moses had told them already that God brought them out of Egypt in order He might bring them into Canaan.

Look at Deuteronomy 6: 21 & 23, **“Then thou shalt say unto thy son, We were Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt; and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand:
And he brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in, to give us the land which he swore unto our fathers.”**

He brought us out of bondage that He might bring us into *ōrestö*. Israel's deliverance from Egypt was deliverance from a PHYSICAL bondage. They were (literally) *ōslavesö* to the Egyptians. God delivered them from that bondage by Judging Egypt and *ōpassing overö* them in that Judgment.

That is a PICTURE of God *ōpassing overö* His elect, (who are in Christ), when He pours out His wrath on the unbelieving world. The blood of the Passover Lamb was National Israel's ONLY defense against God's Judgment of Egypt. In like manner the blood of Christ is Spiritual Israel's ONLY defense against God's Final Judgment.

God had SWORN the land of Canaan to the Fathers of these. I.e. He had GIVEN Canaan to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob IN A PROMISE. God *ōgiving* this generation of Israel the land which He swore unto their fathers is the equivalent of Him *ōgivingö* them their (rightful) INHERITANCE. An INHERITANCE (by definition) is something the HEIR does NOTHING to DESERVE and NOTHING to OBTAIN.

So, these stones Joshua *ōpitched* in Gilgal were to REMIND Israel HOW they GOT here, (I.e. HOW they got to be HEIRS). This memorial was to PROVOKE their children to ask them HOW they became the POSSESSORS of this rich and fruitful land.

So, let us consider, “How DID Israel get here?” Did they climb a mountain? Did they fight a war? Did they engage an enemy?

Look at Joshua 4: 7, “**Then ye shall answer them, That the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD; when it passed over Jordan, the waters of Jordan were cut off: and these stones shall be for a memorial unto the children of Israel forever.**”

This was to be the answer to the children of later generations who would see the memorial and ask, “We walked in on {dry land} over what was once a flowing river. The Ark of the Covenant of the LORD cleared away ALL obstacles. God (Himself) brought us into POSSESSION of this land? God (Himself) GAVE us a land we did nothing to DESERVE and nothing to OBTAIN.”

God (Himself) overcame the ONE thing that was stopping Israel from POSSESSING this land. He overcame in this generation of Israelites the ONE thing that had prevented their fathers from POSSESSING this land.

You remember what ONE thing prevented the fathers of THIS generation from entering in and POSSESSING Canaan? Their fathers claimed it was “the giants” in the land. THEY said it was the “walled cities”. THEY said “our wives and children will become a prey”. But God said it was UNBELIEF.

Look at Hebrews 3: 18-19, “**And to whom swore he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?
19 So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.”**

What was it that the (immediate) fathers of this generation failed (refused) to believe? They failed (they refused) to believe that God had GIVEN Israel this land. No matter that it was presently occupied by nations stronger and mightier than they were. No matter that these nations would (no doubt) defend what they believed to be theirs. No matter that they were entrenched in “walled cities”. Nevertheless, God had GIVEN this land to Israel. And, all Israel had to do, (all Israel was commanded to do), was to go in and POSSESS what was ALREADY theirs.

So, HOW did THIS generation of Israel become the POSSESSORS of the Promised Land? HOW did they get HERE?

Look back at Joshua 4: 7, “**Then ye shall answer them, That the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD; when it passed over Jordan, the waters of Jordan were cut off: and these stones shall be for a memorial unto the children of Israel forever.**”

God eliminated from them everything that would cause them to look back on this day and boast. And, He set before them that which would cause them to look back on this day and consider the ðmiraculous work of Godð. God did for THIS generation what He had not done for their unbelieving fathers. He overcame their UNBELIEF.

Their WORST opposition, their FIERCEST enemies were not the ones WITHIN Canaan. It was (the) ONE in their own minds. Their FIERCEST enemy was their own UNBELIEF.

NOTHING could stop Israel from POSSESSING the land that was ALREADY theirs. As we will see in the next point, Godðs GLORY is at stake in this matter. Israelðs POSSESSION of Canaan was the fulfillment of a Promise God made to Abraham, reiterated to Isaac, and then to Jacob.

The picture here is that their POSSESSION had NOTHING to do with THEIR EFFORTS, but EVERYTHING to do with Godðs. God removed (the) ONE obstacle that was keeping National Israel from POSSESSING the land that was ALREADY theirs. NOTHING (not even their natural UNBELIEF) could stand in the way of them enjoying what God had prepared for them.

God is known by the WAY He delivers His people. He is known by HOW He saves His people. He is known by HOW they get HERE (HOW they get ðout from underð His wrath; HOW they get ðinto His favorð; HOW they come to ðrestð in Christ ALONE). HOW God does these things is what identifies Him and distinguishes Him from the idols of our imaginations.

Look at Isaiah 45: 21b-22, “*there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me.*”

22 Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I *am* God, and *there is none else.*”

HOW did you GET here? HOW did I get here? HOW does a sinner, (a sinner by nature in Adam; a sinner by practice in òdead works and evil deeds), HOW does (such) a sinner become the POSSESSER of the eternal salvation that God has provided His people in Christ? How does such a sinner come to òrestö all of their salvation in Christ ALONE?

If you are (truly) in Godø òrestö; if you are (truly) a partaker of Godø salvation, you are HERE because God òmade you willing in the day of His powerö. You are HERE because God made you willing to find your hope in Christ and Christ ALONE.

If you have (truly) BELIEVED (on THE Savior God has provided for His people), it is because God (Himself) has caused you to do so.

Look at John 6: 28-29, “**Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?**”

29 Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.”

It is not enough to òclaimö to BELIEVE. Many òclaimö to BELIEVE. The question is, òAre you BELIEVING *on Him whom God has sentö? You are if God has taught you OF HIM in the Gospel. You are IF God has persuaded you that your only hope is to be found IN HIM. You are IF God has exposed and overcome your UNBELIEF (of Him).*

Donø leave out this part on this issue. If you are (truly) a partaker of Godø salvation, you are HERE because God has overcome your UNBELIEF. You are HERE because God delivered you from finding any hope of salvation is YOUR efforts at obedience.

This UNBELIEF, (NOT believing on “*Him whom God has sentö*), is the FIRST issue the Spirit addresses in the New Birth.

Look at John 16: 7-9, “Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.

8 And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

9 Of sin, because they believe not on me.”

Where does the Spirit of God find EVERY sinner whom He regenerates? He finds them in UNBELIEF. He finds them NOT believing “**on Him whom God has sent**”.

All must be ðconvincedö, ðconvictedö, ðreprovedö on this issue. And, according to this verse, that is the FIRST matter the Spirit addresses in converting a sinner (i.e. bringing them from spiritual death and UNBELIEF to spiritual life and TRUE faith).

This is such a VITAL issue in the matter of salvation that WITHOUT IT, there is no EVIDENCE of life, no EVIDENCE of regeneration, no EVIDENCE that you have entered into God’s salvation.

So, let’s rap up this FIRST point. HOW did National Israel get HERE? God GAVE them POSSESSION of a land they did nothing to DESERVE and nothing to OBTAIN. And, He GAVE it to them for their FATHER’S sake. He GAVE it to them in fulfillment of His promise 470 years earlier. He GAVE it to them NOT because THEY did something, but because HE did EVERYTHING. Their POSSESSION of this land is His glory. Their failure to POSSESS it would be His shame.

HOW does Spiritual Israel get HERE? God GIVES them POSSESSION of a salvation they do nothing to DESERVE and nothing to OBTAIN. He GIVES them this salvation for Christ’s sake. Christ õput away their sinö and they are delivered from God’s eternal wrath because of it. Christ õbrought in everlasting righteousnessö and they stand eternally justified because of it.

In time in each generation God brings them to the Gospel. And, then, He brings them to ðrestö in the Savior “**He has sent**”. In time the Spirit of God overcomes their UNBELIEF and brings them to TRUE faith.

Their POSSESSION of the eternal salvation God has provided is Christ's glory. Their failure to POSSESS it would be Christ's shame.

That is why Christ said in John 6:37, **“All that the Father giveth me SHALL COME to me”**.

And, in John 10:16, **“And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, *and* one shepherd.”**

There is a question here for you and me. Has God given you TRUE faith in Him whom He has sent? And, if so, has that exposed your (previous) UNBELIEF (of Him)?

The SECOND point of our lesson is: Remembering WHY you ARE here.

God did not give Israel this land JUST so they would have a place to live. He did it in order that He would be worshipped, revered, respected, feared.

Look at Joshua 4: 24, **“That all the people of the earth might know the hand of the LORD, that it is mighty: that ye might fear the LORD your God forever.”**

Even by nature men, (**“all the people of the earth”**), can see that God is mighty. We see that He is mighty in Creation. **“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.”** We observe the trees, the clouds, the seasons and are awed by the (obvious), mighty hand of God we see there.

We see that He is mighty in Providence. We see the mighty hand of God and marvel.

But most have never seen just how mighty the hand of God REALLY is. That is because His REAL mighty, (i.e. the mighty that identifies Him and distinguishes Him from all idols; the mighty that identifies Him as a Just God and Savior), His REAL mighty, is seen ONLY in salvation.

Just as certainly as God is known (identified and distinguished) by HOW He saves His people, His people are known (They are identified and distinguished) by their worship of HIM; their reverence of Him. Sinners are commanded to look to **ōa just God and a Saviour**".

Look at Isaiah 45: 21b-22, "***there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me.***

22 Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else."

The problem is that (by nature) NONE know **ōa just God and a Saviour**". The indictment against fallen humanity (one and all) is that NONE seek THIS God.

Look at Rom 3: 10-11, "**As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:**

11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God."

All down through this passage Paul describes men as religious, ("**feet swift to shed blood**" ó sacrifice).

But despite man's natural religiosity, the bottom line indictment against fallen humanity is that NONE **ōfear** THIS God.

Look at Rom 3: 18, "**There is no fear of God before their eyes.**"

NONE have a reverence for the honor of God's character in redemption.

So, if NONE (by nature) **ōfear** God, how do they begin to **ōfear** Him? How does a sinner go from **ōno fear** to **ōfear**?

God has to bring them to this place.

God brought Israel out of bondage in Egypt. He protected them and provided for them through the wilderness. He brought them to the Promised Land. And, He brought them into POSSESSION of that land.

In all this Israel is a PICTURE (a TYPE) of the church (the elect of God out of every kindred, tribe and nation). God brought His elect out of (legal) bondage by the death of their Surety and Substitute, the Lord, Jesus Christ. He protected them and provided for them through their wanderings in the wilderness of false religion. In time He brings them to the knowledge of His salvation, His Savior.

And, in regeneration He brings them into POSSESSION of the salvation He has provided for them, (the salvation Christ worked out by His obedience unto death). This is tantamount to Him bringing them from (legal) fear to a (reverential) fear. He turns on the light.

We have a familiar passage that addresses this issue.

Look at II Cor. 4: 6, **“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”**

God has to show them His eternal love for them IN CHRIST.

The hand of the Lord is mighty. How mighty is it? It is mighty enough to overcome the ONE thing (the ONLY thing) that keeps sinners from entering Canaan. It is mighty enough to overcome UNBELIEF.

Who among us has felt the might (mightiness) of the Lord's hand?

By Mark Pannell