

Beginning a New Journey

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A new day dawned. A new era had begun for Israel. Their punishment in the wilderness was completed. Their great deliverer, Moses, had died. Joshua's leadership commenced. God's promise of land and prosperity was within reach. Israel would now have to begin a great military campaign to conquer Canaan.

Israel camped at Shittim for three days. The time had finally come. The Levitical priests would lead the people bearing the Ark of the Covenant. They were instructed to follow behind the Ark at a distance. They had not passed by this way before. The Ark would lead them.

"Then Joshua rose early in the morning and they set out from Shittim. And they came to the Jordan, he and all the people of Israel, and lodged there before they passed over. At the end of three days the officers went through the camp and commanded the people, "As soon as you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God being carried by the Levitical priests, then you shall set out from your place and follow it. Yet there shall be a distance between you and it, about 2,000 cubits in length. Do not come near it, in order that you may know the way you shall go, for you have not passed this way before" (Josh. 3:1-4).

As we begin a new year, we are reminded that we have not passed by this way before. For some, they will begin a new phase of life. Some will marry. Some will graduate. Some will have a child. Some will retire. Some will receive bad news. Some will lose loved ones. The future is filled with "known unknowns."

Feelings of hope and anticipation, anxiety and uncertainty are all wrapped up in the thought of beginning a new journey. Israel must have been excited and frightened as they began their conquest. Like them, we have no choice in taking our journey. Time marches on and we with time.

As We Begin a New Journey,

Remember...

1). God is with us. As Israel began their new journey, God recognized their challenges. He knew they would be excited and nervous. Therefore, God made a promise to calm their anxious hearts. God promised Joshua, "No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you" (Josh. 1:5).

All these years later, God has made a similar promise to us. He has promised to be with us throughout the long, winding journey of life. He travels with us to see us on to our promised rest. Notice what God has done to ensure the success of our journey. God has given us His...

Son: 2 Pet. 1:3: “His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence.”

Spirit: Gal. 5:16, 25: “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh... If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.”

Word: Psa. 119:105: “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”

People: Gal. 6:1-2: “Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”

2). We must face our battles with courage. God made provisions for Israel; yet, they still had to face their enemies. They had to take Canaan. God urged Joshua, “Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them” (Josh. 1:6). While victory was promised, the conquest would be challenging.

As Christians, victory has already been won for us by the resurrection of Jesus. The path to eternal life has already been blazed. Yet, traveling the path is difficult. We too must be strong and courageous when life surprises us. We must use God’s provisions to battle along the journey. As fearsome as life can be, we must remember that “God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control” (2 Tim. 1:7).

3). With God, the future is always bright. Israel struggled to see the brightness of God’s future. Sometimes they wanted to go back to Egypt. Early in their military campaign, Achan was tempted by the spoils of war. Likewise, the struggles of the world can delude us into thinking we were better off before we were Christians. Or, that if we quit the faith life would improve. We must not lose sight of the bright future of the people of God.

As bright as Israel’s future was at the beginning of this journey, their inheritance was a mere symbol of an even greater future for the people of God. Many generations after Joshua, someone wrote, “For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience” (Heb. 4:8-11).

The brightness of our future radiates from the light of God’s Son. By raising Jesus from the dead, the path to eternal life has been illuminated. We must have faith enough to follow (2 Tim. 1:8-10).

Conclusion

As Israel followed the Ark, we must follow Christ. There will be battles. There will be victories and defeats. Through it all, we must never give up. We must fight the good fight (2 Tim. 4:7-8).