

John SERIES PART - 41

WHERE ARE YOU ON THE SPIRITUAL MAP OF YOUR LIFE?

This is our 3rd week looking at the victorious, overflowing, abundant life Christ offered in the Gospel by John. This morning are you enjoying this power of Jesus Christ's victorious life? For the past 2000 years, the effect of Jesus in the lives of those who believe Him is undeniable. If you look around you, around the world, and back through history the fact is that millions upon millions of lives have been changed by the power of Jesus Christ. Those who were formerly weak have become strong, those enslaved by selfishness have become selfless, those who lived so long morally and spiritually defeated have become radiantly victorious, those ensnared to fear and worry have become peacefully serene, and those whose lives were nothing but evil have become full of Christ's goodness, gentleness, and kindness.

Remember that power walker named Douglas I mentioned last week? Unknown to me, that man who burst into my quiet study was among other things, a black belt in martial arts, and a man of the bar scene. Before Christ he loved to drink, loved to fight, and loved to brutally teach anyone who fought with him a hard lesson. His goal was to pick up willing girls at darkened nightclubs and bars for his lusts. After dropping to his knees in my office and simply calling out to Jesus in faith for salvation, he changed completely. The next week when he came back for his next lesson as he called it he was beaming and showed me what he called the "verse about me"! What did he find that week as he read the entire New Testament? Titus 3:3-8. In fact, a few weeks later as I stood beside him in the waters of baptism he read those verses and shared his amazing transformation by Christ.

Please stand with me and listen to the testimony of the victorious Christian life.

At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. 4 But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. 8 This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things,

so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.

Now, the question is where are we in our spiritual walk this morning? Are you living in this power of Christ's salvation? Or is your life heading in the wrong direction? God's Word is a historical atlas that charts the lives of saints and sinners. In the Bible we see right and wrong decisions and the good and bad consequences. We see all of this in an inspired record, unedited by human pride and undistorted by human error. The Apostle Paul once summed up the whole record of God's dealings with Israel in this way in 1 Corinthians 10:6, 11 "Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. These things happened to them **as examples and were written down as warnings for us**, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come."

Now, think with me just about Israel as a nation. God summarizes all His dealings with Israel by four specific geographic locations that were not only places that Israel lived, but also in God's Word represent their spiritual condition. What do I mean? Well 1st let me share the four places¹ that will make it clearer. When you think of God's people you will always find them in one of these places: living in the land of Egypt, living in the Wilderness of wandering, living in the Promised land of Canaan, or living in the land of captivity called Babylon.

The four geographic locations seen in the history of Israel illustrate four spiritual experiences.

1. **EGYPT** was the place of death and bondage from which Israel was delivered at the 1st Passover. This reminds us of Christ's death and resurrection, which delivers the believing sinner from bondage and judgment. = Unsaved and before salvation
2. **THE WILDERNESS** experience of Israel was the 40 painful years in the barren wastelands of Sinai, of cravings for their old life, complaining about their new life, and multiplied chastisements from God at every hand. This depicts believers who live in unbelief and disobedience and don't enter into the rest and riches of their inheritance in Christ, either because they don't know it's there or they know and refuse to enter. They are delivered from Egypt, but Egypt is still in their hearts; and like the Jews, they have a desire to go back to the old life. Instead of marching through life as conquerors, they meander through life as wanderers and never enjoy the fullness of what God has planned for them. = Immature Christian lives
3. **CANAAN** was the place of promise, blessing, and riches. It was the inheritance and possession God promised to Abraham's descendents. The Promised Land represents the Christian life, as it ought to be: conflict and victory, faith and obedience, spiritual riches and rest. It's a life of faith, trusting Jesus Christ, our Joshua, the Captain of our salvation (Heb. 2:10), to lead us from victory to victory (1 John 5: 4-5). = Mature Christian lives

¹ Adapted from

4. **BABYLON** was where the nation of Israel endured seventy years of captivity because they disobeyed God and worshiped the idols of the pagan nations around them. This represents the periods in life when God's children are willfully rebellious, their loving Father must chasten them until they learn to be submissive and obedient (Heb. 12:1–11). When they confess their sins and forsake them, God will forgive and restore His children to fellowship and fruitfulness (1 John 1:9; 2 Cor. 7:1). = God's chastening

As John² captures the 1st sign miracle by Jesus for his Gospel he must have thought, these are not just physical events Jesus did in Judea and Samaria once long ago, these are also the miracles of salvation that He STILL DOES! JESUS MAKES LIFE BACK INTO WHAT GOD INTENDED FOR IT TO BE

This story is John saying to *us*: “If you want the new exhilaration, become a follower of Jesus Christ, and there will come a change in your life which will be like water turning into wine.” John 10:10 the thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. (NKJV). Are you enjoying Christ's offer of an overflowing, endless, joy filled victorious Christian life?

1st JESUS GAVE US 7 REFLECTIONS OF SALVATION IN THE SIGN MIRACLES

The divine perfection of Jesus is reflected in the seven “Signs” John records from Christ's life. John built his whole Gospel as bridge with seven successive sign posts that transport you to the ultimate sign of chapter 20 - The resurrection of Christ. John notes the ministry of Christ in light of its impact on the hearts of those who saw these signs. What were the signs Christ performed to bring those who saw His ministry to belief? Out of the many miracles³ that Christ performed, John selected seven to prove His deity. (The eighth in chapter 21 was for the disciples alone and forms a postlude to the Gospel.) These seven signs are given in a specific order (note 4:54, “This is again the second miracle”), they prove Christ's Deity, and they portray a beautiful picture of our salvation.

THE FIRST THREE SIGNS SHOW SALVATION'S RECEPTION BY THE BELIEVER:

1. **HE TURNS** water into wine (2:1–11)— Christ's salvation is **ALWAYS MIRACULOUS**;
2. **HE HEALS** the nobleman's son (4:46–54)—Christ's salvation is **ONLY BY FAITH**;
3. **HE HEALS** the paralytic (5:1–9)—salvation is **BY GRACE ALONE**;

THE LAST FOUR SIGNS SHOW SALVATION'S RESULTS IN THE BELIEVER:

4. **HE FEEDS** the 5,000 (6:1–14)—salvation brings **INEXHAUSTIBLE SATISFACTION**;
5. **HE STILL** the storm (6:16–21)—salvation brings **COMPLETE PEACE**;

² Adapted and quoted from Barclay, William, *Daily Study Bible Series: The Gospel of John - Volume 1 Chapters 1-7 (Revised Edition)*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press) 2000, c1975.

³ This outline was adapted from Warren W. Wiersbe, *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books) 1992.

6. **HE HEALS** the blind man (9:1–7)—salvation brings **LIGHT TO OUR SOULS**;
7. **HE RAISES** Lazarus (11:38–45)—salvation brings the power of an **ENDLESS LIFE**;

JESUS OFFERS AN ENDLESS, OVERFLOWING LIFE OF VICTORIOUS LIVING

This morning look with me again at the 1st of Christ's Sign Miracles⁴. In it we have a striking picture of the regeneration of a sinner. What would the sermon have been after our Lord turned the water into wine? What might He have said?

1. **JESUS OFFERS INEXHAUSTIBLE JOYS**: The wine running out reminds us that **the world's joy always runs out** and cannot be regained, but the joy He gives is an ever flowing river of life giving water. He also says that His eternal life is more abundant than anything else in the Universe! That is quite an offer. John 7:38 "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.'"
2. **JESUS OFFERS A MIRACULOUS SALVATION**:
 - **JESUS KNOWS OUR EMPTINESS**:
 - **JESUS REMOVES OUR WORTHLESSNESS**:
 - **JESUS OFFERS ENDLESS, NEVER ENDING JOYS**: There is another thing to note in this connection. There were v. 6 "***six water pots, each held between twenty and thirty gallons of water***"; Jesus turned the water into wine. That would give anything up to one hundred and eighty gallons of wine. Simply to state that fact is to show that John did not mean the story to be taken with crude literalness. What John did mean to say is that when the grace of Jesus comes to men there is enough and to spare for all. No wedding party on earth could drink one hundred and eighty gallons of wine. No need on earth can exhaust the grace of Christ; there is a glorious superabundance in it.

Now, think with me just about Israel as a nation. God gives us four specific geographic locations that were not only places that Israel lived, but also in God's Word represent their spiritual condition. The events recorded in the Book of Joshua have to do with the *life* of God's people and not their *death*! The Book of Joshua records battles, defeats, sins, and failures—none of which will take place in heaven. This book illustrates how believers today can say good-bye to the old life and enter into their rich inheritance in Jesus Christ. It explains how we can meet our enemies and defeat them, and how to claim for ourselves all that we have in Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:3). What Paul's letter to the Ephesians explains doctrinally, the Book of Joshua illustrates practically. It shows us how to claim our *riches* in Christ.

But it also shows us how to claim our *rest* in Christ. This is one of the major themes of the Book of Hebrews and is explained in chapters 3 and 4 of that epistle. In those chapters, we find four different "rests," all of which are related: the rest God gave Israel after their conquest of Canaan (3:7–19). God's promise to Moses was "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest" (Ex. 33:14, NKJV). The Jews certainly had no rest

⁴ Much of these thoughts were adapted and quoted from A. W. Pink, *The Gospel by John*, p. 98-99.

in Egypt or during their wilderness wanderings; but in the Promised Land, God would give them rest. In his farewell message to the people, Moses said, "For as yet you have not come to the rest and the inheritance which the Lord your God is giving you" (Deut. 12:9, NKJV; and see 3:20; 12:9–10; 25:19). *This "Canaan rest" is a picture of the rest that Christian believers experience when they yield their all to Christ and claim their inheritance by faith.* The four geographic locations seen in the history of Israel illustrate four spiritual experiences.

1. **EGYPT** was the place of death and bondage from which Israel was delivered. They were delivered from death by the blood of the lamb and from bondage by the power of God who opened the Red Sea and took them across safely. This illustrates the salvation we have through faith in Jesus Christ, "The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29, NKJV) Through His death and resurrection, Jesus Christ delivers the believing sinner from bondage and judgment.
2. **THE WILDERNESS** experience of Israel depicts believers who live in unbelief and disobedience and don't enter into the rest and riches of their inheritance in Christ, either because they don't know it's there or they know and refuse to enter. Like Israel, they come to a crisis place (Kadesh Barnea), but refuse to obey the Lord and claim His will for their lives (Num. 13–14). They are delivered from Egypt, but Egypt is still in their hearts; and like the Jews, they have a desire to go back to the old life (Ex. 16:1–3; Num. 11; 14:2–4; see Isaiah 30:3; 31:1). Instead of marching through life as conquerors, they meander through life as wanderers and never enjoy the fullness of what God has planned for them. It's this crowd that is especially addressed in the Epistle to the Hebrews.
1. **CANAAN** represents the Christian life, as it ought to be: conflict and victory, faith and obedience, spiritual riches and rest. It's a life of faith, trusting Jesus Christ, our Joshua, the Captain of our salvation (Heb. 2:10), to lead us from victory to victory (1 John 5:4–5). When Israel was in Egypt, the enemy was *around* them, making their lives miserable. When they crossed the Red Sea, Israel put the enemy *behind* them; but when the nation crossed the Jordan River, they saw new enemies *before* them, and they conquered these enemies by faith. The victorious Christian life isn't a once-for-all triumph that ends all our problems. As pictured by Israel in the Book of Joshua, the victorious Christian life is a series of conflicts and victories as we defeat one enemy after another and claim more of our inheritance to the glory of God. The eminent Scottish preacher Alexander Whyte used to say that the victorious Christian life was "a series of new beginnings." According to Joshua 11:23, the whole land was taken; but according to 13:1, there remained "very much land to be possessed." Is this a contradiction? No, it's the declaration of a basic spiritual truth: In Christ, we have all that we need for victorious Christian living, but we must possess our inheritance by faith, a step at a time (Josh. 1:3), and a day at a time. Joshua's question to his people is a good question to ask the church today: "How long will you wait before you begin to take possession of the land that the Lord . . . has given you?" (18:3, NIV) Joshua best exemplifies living in the Promised Land of Canaan. We notice that the leading person in the Book of

Joshua is not Joshua but the Lord. The Hero of the Promised is **the God of** Joshua and of Israel. In all that Joshua did in the conquest, we see him doing by faith. He always desired to glorify the Lord.

- When the Jews crossed the Jordan River, Joshua reminded them that the living God was among them and would overcome their enemies (Josh. 3:10).
- Through Israel's obedience, Joshua wanted all the people of the earth to know the Lord and fear Him (4:23–24).
- In his "farewell addresses" to the leaders (chap. 23) and to the nation (chap. 24), Joshua gave God all the glory for what Israel had accomplished under his leadership.

Also Promised Land Victorious Living is explained at least fourteen times in this book in a special way, when God is called "the Lord God of Israel" (7:13, 19–20; 8:30; 9:18–19; 10:40, 42; 13:14, 33; 14:14; 22:24; 24:2, 23). Why? *Because everything that Israel did brought either glory or disgrace to the name of their God.* When Israel obeyed by faith, God kept His promises and worked on their behalf; and God was glorified. But when they disobeyed in unbelief, God abandoned them to their own ways and they were humiliated in defeat. The same spiritual principle applies to the church today.

4. **BABYLON**, where the nation endured seventy years of captivity because they disobeyed God and worshiped the idols of the pagan nations around them. (See 2 Chronicles 36; Jeremiah 39:8–10). When God's children are willfully rebellious, their loving Father must chasten them until they learn to be submissive and obedient (Heb. 12:1–11). When they confess their sins and forsake them, God will forgive and restore His children to fellowship and fruitfulness (1 John 1:9; 2 Cor. 7:1). This morning, as you look at your life and the life of the church where you fellowship, do you see yourself and your fellow believers wandering in the wilderness or conquering in the Promised Land?
- In the wilderness, the Jews were a complaining people; but in Canaan, they were a conquering people.
 - In the wilderness, Israel kept looking back, yearning for what they had in Egypt; but in the Promised Land, they looked forward to conquering the enemy and claiming their rest and their riches.
 - In the Wilderness there was chastisement and confusion, in Canaan there was worship and wonder.
 - In the Wilderness generation, everyone (but Joshua and Caleb) perished and lost the Promised Land, in the Canaan generation everyone lived and obtained the Promised Land.
 - The wilderness march was an experience of delay, defeat, and death; but their experience in Canaan was one of life, power, and victory.

As you look at the "spiritual map" of your Christian life, where are you living? Like the patient potter, God is willing to "mold us again" when we resist Him and damage our own lives. **The famous Scottish preacher Alexander Whyte used to say that the victorious Christian life was "a series of new beginnings." No failure in our**

lives need be fatal or final, although we certainly suffer for our sins. God gave new beginnings to Abraham, Moses, David, Jonah, and Peter when they failed, and He can do the same for us today.

To close and apply this to our lives this morning please turn with me to II Corinthians 2:14-17.

This passage teaches us the daily walk in victory that we are to live in. The picture⁵ in II Corinthians 2:14–17 was familiar to every Roman but is not to twentieth-century Christians. An official “Roman Triumph” was indeed something to behold! If a commander in chief won a complete victory over the enemy on foreign soil, and if he killed at least 5,000 enemy soldiers and gained new territory for the Emperor, then that commander in chief was entitled to a Roman Triumph.

The processional would include the commander riding in a golden chariot, surrounded by his officers, priests burned incense in his honor, and the people shouted his name and praised him. The parade would also include a display of the spoils of battle, as well as the captive enemy soldiers. The Roman priests would also be in the parade, carrying burning incense to pay tribute to the victorious army. The procession would follow a special route through the city and would end at the Circus Maximus where the helpless captives would entertain the people by fighting wild beasts. That was a “Roman Triumph.” It was a very special day in Rome when the citizens were treated to a full-scale “Roman Triumph.”

APPENDIX

These are all the great insights I found as I studied but didn’t use in my message.

I’m sure that by now you can see the steps of their spiritual pilgrimage just by naming those four geographic locations. And already some of you think of how much of the Old Testament is devoted to these four locations.

1. EGYPT: Covers the Old Testament period from Genesis 12 to Exodus 15 or roughly 630 years. Genesis 12 is where Abram first slips down out of the Land of Promise into Egypt during a famine, and there picks up a handmaiden for his wife Sarah named Hagar; God’s people are touched by Egypt. It is from a visit to Egypt that the problems between Isaac and Ishmael, that are in the news today, began. Egypt covers from Genesis 12 to Exodus 15 and the death of Pharaoh’s army in the Red Sea. Then again Egypt surfaces in I Kings 3:1 during Solomon’s slide away from God by marrying a pagan wife who was Pharaoh’s daughter⁶. Egypt again returns in I Kings 14:25 as the instrument of judgment as Shishak⁷ strips away all of David and Solomon’s treasures.

⁵ Sections following quoted variously from Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Strong, Be Decisive* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1994, and *Wiersbe’s Expository Outlines on the New Testament*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books) 1992.

⁶ The Pharaoh was probably Siamun, the next-to-last ruler of the weak 21st dynasty. Solomon’s treaty with Pharaoh signified that he held a high standing in the world of his day.

⁷ Shishak was the founder of the 22nd dynasty in Egypt. He reigned ca. 945–924 B.C.

2. WILDERNESS: Covers from Exodus 16 to Joshua 2. This period lasts 40 years and was the place of immense spiritual significance.
3. CANAAN: covers the majority of the Old Testament from Joshua 3 to II Chronicles 36. And after the Captivity by Haggai through Malachi.
4. BABYLON: is the 70 plus years of Captivity described in part by Ezra through Esther.

But it also shows us how to claim our *rest* in Christ. This is one of the major themes of the Book of Hebrews and is explained in chapters 3 and 4 of that epistle. In those chapters, we find four different “rests,” all of which are related:

1. God’s Sabbath rest after creating the worlds (Heb. 4:4; Gen. 2:2);
2. The salvation rest we have in Christ (Heb. 4:1, 3, 8–9; Matt. 11:28–30);
3. The believer’s eternal rest in heaven (Heb. 4:11); and
4. The rest God gave Israel after their conquest of Canaan (3:7–19). God’s promise to Moses was “My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest” (Ex. 33:14, NKJV). The Jews certainly had no rest in Egypt or during their wilderness wanderings; but in the Promised Land, God would give them rest. In his farewell message to the people, Moses said, “For as yet you have not come to the rest and the inheritance which the Lord your God is giving you” (Deut. 12:9, NKJV; and see 3:20; 12:9–10; 25:19). *This “Canaan rest” is a picture of the rest that Christian believers experience when they yield their all to Christ and claim their inheritance by faith.*

The Old Testament is the spiritual atlas of the lives of the Old Testament saints and sinners from God’s all seeing, all knowing, and everywhere present perspective. And He gave us that record flawlessly by way of His inspired prophets! So every time you open the pages of God’s Word you get to look down upon the lives of the 2,930 specific individual men and women named in the pages of Scripture.