



**Joshua 1:10-18**  
The Church United

10 Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying,

11 "Pass through the camp and command the people, saying, 'Prepare provisions for yourselves, for within three days you will cross over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land which the LORD your God is giving you to possess.' "

12 And to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh Joshua spoke, saying,

13 "Remember the word which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, saying, 'The LORD your God is giving you rest and is giving you this land.'

14 "Your wives, your little ones, and your livestock shall remain in the land which Moses gave you on this side of the Jordan. But you shall pass before your brethren armed, all your mighty men of valor, and help them,

15 "until the LORD has given your brethren rest, as He gave you, and they also have taken possession of the land which the LORD your God is giving them. Then you shall return to the land of your possession and enjoy it, which Moses the LORD's servant gave you on this side of the Jordan toward the sunrise."

16 So they answered Joshua, saying, "All that you command us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go.

17 "Just as we heeded Moses in all things, so we will heed you. Only the LORD your God be with you, as He was with Moses.

18 "Whoever rebels against your command and does not heed your words, in all that you command him, shall be put to death. Only be strong and of good courage."

One of the greatest problems that has beset the church in every age is a lack of unity, we simply fail to realize that our particular church or our denomination, or indeed the Christian church in our nation is in fact part of the larger visible church which is (to quote the Larger Catechism) ***"a society made up of all such as in all ages and places of the world do profess the true religion, and of their children."***

Both the book of Joshua, and to a certain extent the book of Acts, therefore stress the need for unity in the church as the church strives to fulfill its commission in the midst of the world.

Here for instance, in the verses that we have just read Joshua addresses three tribes in particular about the need for unity with the rest of Israel, which of course was the visible church in the OT. You see these tribes had asked Moses in Numbers 32 to be given land on the Eastern Side of the Jordan, which would effectively cut them off from the rest of the Tribes of Israel because of the physical barrier of the Jordan river which would separate them. They had asked for this land because they had much livestock and saw that the land was good for grazing animals, but technically, the land was not part of Canaan and Moses fear was that this was a manifestation of another rebellion like Kadesh Barnea. He told them in Exodus 32:6-7 ***"Shall your brethren go to war while you sit here? 7 "Now why will you discourage the heart of the children of Israel from going over into the land which the LORD has***

*given them?"* Why should the other tribes be forced to cross over Jordan and fight to gain their land while you stay here and rest in the land that they all fought to subdue? Don't you see what that will do to the determination of the people?

So the tribes say to Moses, don't worry we will build our Cities and our shelters, and enclosures for our animals, but all of our men will arm themselves for battle and cross over with the other tribes to conquer the land that God is giving us. Don't worry Moses we will stick together and help the other tribes to gain their lands just as they have helped us to gain ours. Although we will be separated from the rest of the tribes by topography we will remember that we are part of *col yisrael* "All Israel."

So here Joshua is reminding them of their covenant with Moses and they answer his call here. But the time will come in the book of Judges when the tribes beyond the Jordan stop answering the call of their brothers and they do begin to forsake that essential unity. So that in Judges 5 for instance, the tribes beyond the Jordan are castigated for not coming over to aid the rest of the tribes in their struggle against the army of Sisera. They begin to stop thinking of themselves as part of *Col Yisrael* and begin to think of themselves in terms only of their own region, their own area. *"Sisera's army is a problem for the people on the other side of the Jordan, not us. Let them deal with him."*

Here we see the agenda of the world, the flesh, and the Devil bearing fruit – they are are not stupid, in striving against God's people they have sought to splinter the church as much as they possible could, pursuing a policy of divide and conquer.

Now all of this is not to say that the church is not sometimes forced to divide in order to "purge out the leaven" to cut off portions that no longer profess the true religion. For instance, when a portion of God's people cease to confess that the Bible is God's Word, or that Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God, and refuse to repent of these confessions then sadly it becomes necessary to conclude that they are no part of the visible church, because they no longer profess the true religion, but have in fact degenerated to the point where they are nothing but a synagogue of Satan.

But the world and the Devil are eager to see the church divide for reasons other than maintaining the purity of the Gospel, they would have us divide on any pretence whatsoever, for instance along racial lines. Unfortunately Martin Luther King's famous quote is still essentially correct, ***II AM truly is the most segregated hour in America***, and that not because Caesar has commanded that races may not mingle in their churches or because our denominations have enacted an ecclesiastical version of Jim Crow, but because the members of the visible church have self-consciously determined that we will worship only with our "own kind."

This personally drives me crazy, I find it more than a little heartbreaking that here in Fayetteville on both sides it is almost impossible to cross over the invisible line of color. Why? Because we all might feel uncomfortable, we don't have to cross over the Jordan, we have to do something people are even more loath to do, cross out of our natural comfort zone.

Now we shrug our shoulders over this, and we say "O well, that's sad" and sigh, and then resume business as normal, but we forget that this kind of division weakens the kingdom, and runs counter to the teaching of the Word about our essential unity.

Eph. 2:14 For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation,

15 having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace,

Col. 3:9 Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds,

10 and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,

11 where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.

We also forget that the communion of the church as she assembles to worship the Lord on the Sabbath is supposed to be a foretaste of heaven, a tiny slice of what heaven will be like. But if our Sunday worship is entirely homogenous as to race, then that "tiny slice" is fundamentally inaccurate. Because by the grace of God, heaven, the church in glory, will not be segregated as the church on earth is.

Turn in your bibles to Rev. 5:8 -

***Rev. 5:8 8 Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.***

***9 And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,***

***10 And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth."***

***11 Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands,***

***12 saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!"***

***13 And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: "Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!"***

***14 Then the four living creatures said, "Amen!" And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.***

So for us to take the attitude, "hmmppph well maybe I'll have to worship with them in heaven, maybe that is God's will, but I can wait for that day" is entirely wrong. You even confess that when you pray the Lord's prayer. "YOUR KINGDOM COME, YOUR WILL BE DONE, **ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN**"

In one of his *Coram Deos in Tabletalk Magazine*, R.C. Sproul wrote: "We are united to the heavenly realm, but we live on earth. The reason is clear: We are to act so that God's "will is done on earth as it is in heaven." In heaven God is praised; so it should be here. In heaven God is feared and obeyed; so it should be here. Think of a specific thing that you can do today to manifest heaven on earth."

I can think of one, and this my primary application,  
It has 2 parts:

1) Resist division or splintering in the church that occurs for any reason other than that of dividing for the sake of the purity of the Gospel. This means resisting division along economic or demographic

lines, or according to age, and nationality, and race. I have even seen churches splinter along the lines of family, or even we are the homeschooling group, we don't associate with the non-homeschooling group. We are the NASCAR group, whereas we are the young married without kids yet group, *the young almost married with one child from a prior relationship, currently seeking employment in the health care industry group.*

There are no divisions in the body of Christ, he came to make us one, and we are impoverished when his body is divided when the hand says to the eye "I have no need of you" Christ died to break down the wall of separation not only between man and God, but between man and man, and will we rebuild that wall? Divided the church is always less able to fulfill his commission just as the tribes would have been unable to conquer the land divided.

And remember this is Christ's church in America, not the American church.

2) When Jesus commissioned the church he said:

*Matthew 28: 18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.*

*19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,*

*20 "teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.*

We have been called to make disciples of all the nations, therefore let us strive to do so!

Strive to build the Church United.