

On the Edge of Canaan

With a global mission

“After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’” (Rev. 7:9, 10).

The data was in, the study complete. Ten out of 12 experts agreed: Taking possession of the Promised Land was impossible. Their arguments made sense; the inhabitants of Canaan were stronger and better equipped, and Israel didn’t stand a chance. There was just one problem with their data: It was tempting them to doubt God’s promise.

“Arise,” God told Abraham, “walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you” (Gen. 13:17).

Have you noticed that God seldom asks His people to do what seems possible? Leave Egypt? The pharaoh would never allow it. Leave by the route that ends at the Red Sea? How were they supposed to cross it? Take possession of Canaan? How?

But notice that when they *did* enter the Promised Land 40 years later, they followed the ark of the covenant. The Jordan parted as the priests carried the ark into the water. When the walls of Jericho fell, they were still following the ark, the symbol of God’s authority in heaven’s sanctuary.

But now they were doubting God’s promise because it just didn’t seem reasonable. Only two of the 12 chose to believe that if God was asking for it, it was certain to happen. And when the audience chose to trust the naysayers, failing to trust God’s plan, they ended up stuck in the wilderness for 40 years.

As they were turned away from Canaan, God revealed what He had intended: It was far more than a simple scouting mission across the border, or even the conquest of a few villages. “Truly, as I live,” God told Moses, “all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord” (Num. 14:21).

It's the same end goal we find in the book of Revelation, where God promises to illuminate the world with Christ's glory (Rev. 18:1). A lack of faith on our part will not ultimately frustrate His plans to take back the planet and establish the kingdom of Christ. We might delay it through a lack of faith, but we will not stop it; The world—the *entire* world—will be lit up. You'll notice that God didn't say, "This land will be filled with the glory of the Lord." Instead, He laid claim to the whole earth.

Always Been Global

Whether we're talking about the Old or New Testament church, God's goal has always been the same: the entire planet. Listen carefully to His words through the prophet Isaiah:

"I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, that you should be My salvation to the ends of the earth" (Isa. 49:6).

"For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; but the Lord will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you. The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising" (Isa. 60:2, 3).

Under the rules of the great controversy, which are based on God's character, He has allowed the human race a remarkable degree of liberty. We are free to walk away from Him and live as we please (see Acts 14:16). The very existence of the world's nations is proof that this liberty is real, and the beasts that rise from the sea in Daniel's vision illustrate how this freedom causes so much trouble for our planet: The winds whip up the surface of the water, generation after generation, causing untold pain and heartache as power continually shifts between the world's leading powers. It is trouble that will not stop until the judgment sits and the Son of man is awarded His kingdom:

"Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed" (Dan. 7:14).

The task of God's last-day remnant church is the same as it was for Israel, because God's love for sinners hasn't changed: We are to bring the light of Christ to *all* nations. "Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven," John tells us, "having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—saying with a loud voice, 'Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water'" (Rev. 14:6, 7).

Standing at the Border

Like Israel, we now find ourselves sitting on the very border of the Promised Land. Everything God told us would happen? It's either already happened, as with most of the prophecies of Daniel, or it appears to be happening *right now*. And like Israel, we have an encouraging report from someone who slipped into the Promised Land—in vision—and brought back a challenge for us to be faithful:

"There are great difficulties and trials before us. It will require strong courage and persevering effort to go forward. But all now depends on our faith in the Captain who has led us safely thus far. Shall we let unbelief come in now? Shall we weakly yield to distrust and fear? Shall we compromise with the world, and turn away from the heavenly Canaan?"* At this moment the real question is

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whether we will repeat Israel's mistake and stay here for yet another generation.

There is no question that the world is full of intimidating giants. To our minds, the powers of darkness seem to have more power, more influence, and more resources. We see the task we've been given—the message we are asked to share—and while it excites us personally, we also feel a sense of panic when we consider the world with whom we are supposed to share it: "*This message? To those people? How?*"

We are tempted to fall back on studies—empirical data that seem to prove that the Christian faith is losing ground. Churches are shrinking. Young people are turning away from religion. People have given up on the very idea of objective truth. How are we supposed to light up *that* world with the glory of Christ? It appears to be a mission doomed to failure.

But then God reminds us of the same thing He did on the day Israel chose to reject the challenge: "After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory" (Rev. 18:1).

God is daring us to lay claim to a world that *will* belong to Him. Lift your foot. Push past the fear and step over the line into Canaan. Understand that it takes courage to believe God in spite of what critics say. Be faithful. Tell someone what you know of Jesus. Be a part of the light that is about to illuminate the world. **✞**

* Ellen G. White, in *Review and Herald*, Nov. 29, 1881.