

Talks – Possessing the Land – myfishbites.com

Possessing The Land

In Deuteronomy, God spoke many times to the people of Israel about crossing the Jordan and “entering the land the Lord your God has given you.” It got me thinking. What is the ‘land’ that God has given you? What does it represent? Does it relate to a move to another nation, a call to your neighbourhood, a confirmation of your calling to youth work? Today, God is re-asserting to you about ‘entering the land’ that he has given you. What is God saying to you?

Quite a lot of content here, so pick choose and use what you need!

To Possess

If we look at the dictionary definitions, we can find some interpretations of the word ‘possess’:

- to have as belonging to one; have as property
- to have as a faculty, quality, or the like
- to have knowledge of
- to cause to be dominated or influenced, as by an idea, feeling, etc
- to seize or take / to gain or win / to occupy or hold.

How do you possess something?

For example, if I want to buy something, I can do 2 things.. Firstly, I can take some money, go to a shop, take hold of the product, pay for it at the counter and then take it away. Or, I go online, find the website, locate the product, add it to my basket, go to checkout and pay and then wait for delivery.

Or maybe another example is buying a house. When someone eventually completes a contract on a house, the phrase is that they ‘take possession’ of the house. What has happened? Well, they have had to put in a bid, sort the contracts with the solicitors and estate agents and then agree to pay the required amount.

The people of Israel knew through Abraham, Jacob and Isaac that God had given them the Promised Land. But it wouldn’t automatically become their land. They had to take action to ensure it was theirs. Firstly they physically had to go to the land. Secondly, they had to conquer the land. So they had to take action. In the same way, when you want to buy something, you have to physically go to the shop or go on the internet.

But there was a spiritual element. God said that he would give the land to Israel if they followed his commands and obeyed him, he would give them the land. But that if they turned from him, they would have problems. In the same way, we can’t walk into a shop and have a product. We have to pay for it; there is a cost.

God speaks about taking possession of the land – Deuteronomy 11

With this practical example in mind let's take a closer look at just one Bible passage where God speaks to the people of Israel about them taking possession of the Promised Land.

1. Observe God's commands – Verses 8-9

“Observe therefore all the commands I am giving you today, so that you may have the strength to go in and take over the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, and so that you may live long in the land that the LORD swore to your forefathers to give to them and their descendants, a land flowing with milk and honey.”

The people of Israel had seen at first-hand the mighty works of God – how he had delivered them out of Egypt and across the Red Sea while the Egyptians perished. It was on this basis that the people were to obey God. What basis? Well, that God was almighty and powerful and would deliver his people. They had seen and so they would believe. This obedience to God would give faith which would bring courage and blessing from God.

Imagine if you had a magic wand like a Christian 'Harry Potter'. You'd seen that this wand could heal people, it could stop waters flowing, it could stop violence. You would have faith in that wand, know that the wand was powerful and believe and trust in it.

But it was also a warning. God was saying, 'look, I am all-powerful. If you obey me, it will encourage you and you will conquer the land through my strength. I will give you the victory if you stay close to me, because obeying me is the key to the victory as the power comes from me.' More than that, to continue in the victory (living long in the land) would mean staying close to God.

God had promised the people that they would cross the Jordan and conquer the Promised Land. But this would only happen if they obeyed God and his commands – his charges – his laws and statutes. This land had long been promised, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The people would have known of these promises.

Your challenges from verses 8-9:

– What has God spoken over your life? What does he say in his Word about you? Has he spoken specifically? Where is your 'Promised Land'? For some of you, it will be a certain job, or a change in lifestyle. For others it will be in another place. For some it will be doing something in the church, a new ministry perhaps.

– What is your 'Jordan' that you have to 'cross' in order to get to what God has promised? For some of you it may be a personal issue you need to deal with or get over. It may be lack of forgiveness. It may be a disability. It may be a mental barrier or fear. It may simply be you need to do something, or that you need to move. Maybe you need to cross a river physically, or a sea.

– Is your faith in God and are you obeying God? You can't expect God to move if you haven't been obedient. In the late 90s a graduate felt God was calling him and his wife to Tampa, Florida after they'd served there on a mission. There was no promise of pay or

anything else. In time, the youth work built up and the pastor left. Today, Tommy Kyllonen is the pastor of Crossover Community Church, a church of all ages and races in Tampa, with 500 people attending and in contact with 100s of others. If Tommy and wife Lucy hadn't been obedient to that call of God this would never have happened... [Click for more](#)

2. A new land – Verses 10-15

The land you are entering to take over is not like the land of Egypt, from which you have come, where you planted your seed and irrigated it by foot as in a vegetable garden. But the land you are crossing the Jordan to take possession of is a land of mountains and valleys that drinks rain from heaven. It is a land the LORD your God cares for; the eyes of the LORD your God are continually on it from the beginning of the year to its end.

So if you faithfully obey the commands I am giving you today—to love the LORD your God and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul— then I will send rain on your land in its season, both autumn and spring rains, so that you may gather in your grain, new wine and oil. I will provide grass in the fields for your cattle, and you will eat and be satisfied.

We are all on a journey of faith. We may not be where we want to be, but we won't stay the same as God transforms us. Remember that Revelation talks about Jesus returning to meet his bride – a bride who is ready..

Rev 19.7-8: "Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear."

I've been to a few weddings and what strikes you is that the bride doesn't come in looking shabby, and un-prepared (although she may feel that way). Usually she has a beautiful dress, great hair, has had her makeup done just as she likes, smells beautiful to her husband to be and radiates a joy and lightness. This is the kind of church that Jesus is building for himself and God's glory.

Rev 21.2: "And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, all arrayed like a bride beautified and adorned for her husband."

The people of Israel were on a journey from Egypt into the Promised Land. This place would be different – a land of mountains and valleys that drink rain from heaven. This was a land that God cared for, that his eyes were always on, all year. What a place to be and almost gives us a picture of heaven – and of a picture of how God cares and provides for his church. This is a God that sends refreshing, has given us his Holy Spirit. God loves his people, knows them intimately, never turns his back on them, is always faithful, watches for them to wake up in the morning, knows the hairs on their head, the passions in their heart, loves it when they praise him in word and action, has great pleasure when his people obey him, love him and spend time with him.

Secondly, in the old land (Egypt), the people of Israel planted seed but never reaped a harvest. They worked for the Egyptians, toiled and were beaten. It was hard work for little

reward. You may be in a season now where you have been toiling under what feels like the noonday sun (if ever we get any in the UK). It's been a hard few months, years even. Sometimes you've wondered where God is. The people of Israel felt like that too. They had turned their back on God, but maybe you have been faithful and true. Yet still you feel dry and barren. Well there's good news. One day God will bring you into a Promised Land. A land where he provides, where he sends the rain, where your hard work isn't in vain.

For Israel, God promised to send the former rain and the latter rain – the autumn and spring rains, so they would gather in their new wine and new oil. A place where God would provide grass for the cattle, where they would eat and be satisfied. Again, a small glimpse of heaven. But today, God wants you to know that his eyes are on you, he cares for you, sees your pain, longs to hold your hand and carry you through the toughest times. As the Vineyard song, 'Hungry' says:

Hungry I come to You
For I know You satisfy
I am empty but I know
Your love does not run dry

*So I wait for You
So I wait for You
I'm falling on my knees
Offering all of me
Jesus You're all
This heart is living for
Broken I run to You
For Your arms are open wide
I am weary but I know Your touch
Restores my life*

Keep close to God – Verses 16-21

Be careful, or you will be enticed to turn away and worship other gods and bow down to them. Then the LORD's anger will burn against you, and he will shut the heavens so that it will not rain and the ground will yield no produce, and you will soon perish from the good land the LORD is giving you. Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates, so that your days and the days of your children may be many in the land that the LORD swore to give your forefathers, as many as the days that the heavens are above the earth.

In John 15:5-6, Jesus speaks about the Vine. "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned."

Jesus reminds us that we can only do anything that is fruitful if we remain in Jesus – and Jesus in us (in that order). The Amplified Bible reminds us that in Jesus we will bear abundant fruit. Whereas if we do not remain in Christ (being 'vitaly united' to him), we will be 'cut off from vital union' with Christ. Imagine your body for a moment. If I cut off the blood supply from your heart you will wither away and die. Christ is like your heart. Being connected to him is having his life blood pumped around your veins and body. It's vital for life. In the same way, God warned Israel that if they worshipped other gods or disobeyed him, the heavens would shut and there would be no rain or produce and people would perish. The same is true today of people if they reject Jesus. We can have an open heaven or a closed heaven – life or death.

Secondly, in 2 Timothy 3.16 we read in the Amplified Bible that: "Every Scripture is God-breathed (given by His inspiration) and profitable for instruction, for reproof and conviction of sin, for correction of error and discipline in obedience, [and] for training in righteousness (in holy living, in conformity to God's will in thought, purpose, and action)."

If every Scripture is God-breathed and vital, no wonder that God placed such a high priority on his people remembering his words. God is a practical God and gives us strategies to read his Word and to keep it in mind.

Increase follows obedience – Verses 22-25

If you carefully observe all these commands I am giving you to follow—to love the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways and to hold fast to him- then the LORD will drive out all these nations before you, and you will dispossess nations larger and stronger than you. Every place where you set your foot will be yours: Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the Euphrates River to the western sea. No man will be able to stand against you. The LORD your God, as he promised you, will put the terror and fear of you on the whole land, wherever you go.

In Joshua 5.12, we find that once Israel had crossed the Jordan, the manna that God sent as food from heaven stopped the day after and from that day on the people ate the produce from the land of Canaan. Israel had crossed over into a new land and a new season, but their job was not yet complete..

I once went on holiday and unfortunately within a couple days, we had a fairly bad car crash, with the car ending up on the roof 20 metres back down the road after a head-on collision. With a God-infused chilled vibe, I said to the other passengers, "alright lads, out the car.." Within a day, we'd gone back home. Not much of a holiday and we'd hardly done anything.

The goal of Israel was not simply to cross over the river Jordan and to stand in their new Promised Land and have a BBQ and a few (soft) drinks.. The plan wasn't to congratulate each other on a good safe crossing, with very few feeling the effects of sea sickness. It was something more. It was to push on, to keep going, to possess the land.

When the Allies landed on the Normandy beaches in the 2nd World War, their goal wasn't to simply congratulate each other on a good landing. It was to push on into France and beyond to defeat the Nazis and end the war.

The principle that was true for Israel is true for us today. As a Christian, we can't simply stand around and celebrate the fact that we are saved by Jesus and then kick back and relax for a good Christian knees-up all the time. No, we have to do 2 things. Firstly, we have to grow spiritually personally. Secondly we have to take hold of the Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit and push back the kingdom of darkness and reach out and see & disciple new believers. Again, the place of strength is the place where we are walking in faith in God's ways and obeying him, submitting to the Holy Spirit.

My dad isn't great with leads. On more than one occasion, when cutting the hedge with a hedge trimmer, he has sawn through the lead. Fortunately, he always has a circuit breaker on the other end of the lead. But of course the result of the cut cable is that the power to the trimmer is disconnected and it ceases to work. This is the model of our Christian lives when we don't stay connected to the power source of God, and keep the switch flicked to 'on' to allow him to send that power, and stay open to receiving and then using that power. You see, the Lord has already won the victory on the Cross. At Calvary when Jesus cried out "it is finished" he literally meant, "it is completely complete, it is perfectly perfect." Although we have struggles in this life we know that "no weapon formed against us shall prosper" because of Jesus. So when God told the people of Israel that no man would be able stand against them, he's saying the same to you today. Don't fear.

Conquering the Land

In Joshua 6, we find that when the people obeyed God and did exactly as he said, they were able to take the city of Jericho without a shot being fired. Incidentally, Joshua placed a curse on anyone who tried to rebuild Jericho – that they would lose their firstborn in the foundations and youngest son by the gate. This was fulfilled in 1 Kings 16.34 when Hiel lost his firstborn son, Abiram in the foundations and his youngest, Segub at its gates.

However, when Israel went to initially take the city of Ai, they were defeated. God showed them that Achan had sinned by disobeying God and he was dealt with, Israel went back and won the battle. In both these instances, what God said was exactly fulfilled and God did exactly as he promised.

Blessing and Curse – Verses 26-32

See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse- the blessing if you obey the commands of the LORD your God that I am giving you today; the curse if you disobey the commands of the LORD your God and turn from the way that I command you today by following other gods, which you have not known. When the LORD your God has brought you into the land you are entering to possess, you are to proclaim on Mount Gerizim the blessings, and on Mount Ebal the curses. As you know, these mountains are across the Jordan, west of the road, toward the setting sun, near the great trees of Moreh, in the territory of those Canaanites living in the Arabah in the vicinity of Gilgal. You are about to cross the Jordan to enter and take possession of the land the LORD your God is giving you. When you have taken it over and are living there, be sure that you obey all the decrees and laws I am setting before you today.

The power of the occult is very real. In the Old Testament, there was an incident between Moses / Aaron and Jannes / Jambres. If you know anything about hip-hop culture, you'll know that people do things such as 'battle rap' and battle each other breakdancing. This is about beating your opponent without beating them down. Well, this wasn't just 'rod battling', it was about God demonstrating his power..

Exodus 7.8-13: The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "When Pharaoh says to you, 'Perform a miracle,' then say to Aaron, 'Take your staff and throw it down before Pharaoh,' and it will become a snake." So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did just as the LORD commanded. Aaron threw his staff down in front of Pharaoh and his officials, and it became a snake. Pharaoh then summoned wise men and sorcerers, and the Egyptian magicians also did the same things by their secret arts: Each one threw down his staff and it became a snake. But Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs. Yet Pharaoh's heart became hard and he would not listen to them, just as the LORD had said.

Today, this kind of occultic power is strong in Africa and even in the UK. A Bible preacher recounted a story of when he was preaching at a meeting and God just didn't seem to be moving at all. He quietly asked God what was happening and God drew his attention to a woman at the back of the church and the preacher went to her and confronted her. It turned out she was a witch who had come to oppose the preacher. Faced with God in the preacher directly and the name of Jesus spoken against her, she ran out. The service continued and God moved. Other people have told how people who have been demonically possessed have been unable to even enter some churches – in the one case, Coventry Cathedral which is a real centre of prayer and reconciliation (restoring stuff / people / bringing peace).

Let me tell you another story about a friend walking down a High Street with his gran, both Christians and pray-ers. Suddenly this woman looked at them, screamed and with face contorted, ran off. You see, the occult powers cannot stand in the name of Jesus, but let us be wise in knowing the enemy and turning from idols.

I once heard a US bishop working with hip-hop culture in New York (talking about social media), say, 'If you're spending more time on social media than in HIS (God's) space, then you need to change.' The same goes if you watch too much TV. Derek Prince the bible scholar once said, "if you want to have more of God in your life, then change the amount of time you spend watching TV with the amount of time you spend reading your Bible."

Did you know one of the people who runs MTV said MTV don't just decide what young people watch, they "own young people". Not a good thing to think someone says they 'own' you – and not the kind of people you'd give the job too either!

Let's read Ephesians 6.13, "Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand."

You don't want to be an early day Christian only. Some Christians start strong but gradually lose their faith and love, passion for Jesus. I don't want to be like that, no way. I want to stand, I never want to fall, always want to be strong and mad for God and his

Kingdom. I don't want to be like King Solomon who fell away. I want to do my best and see God's best in my life. For those of you who know their Bibles, Derek Prince once asked, "I sometimes ask myself. Am I more likely to see King Solomon in heaven, or King Nebuchadnezzar." I don't want to be like either – but want to start strong, keep strong and finish strong. What about you?

Thirdly, know your enemy, but know God more. The Israelites knew they would be up against some serious enemies and knew they would have to fight to claim God's inheritance and see his promises fulfilled. They went into battle aware. Today, we need to be aware of the devil's lies, tricks and mind games. We need to keep close to God and 'take every thought captive' –

1 Corinthians 10.4-6: The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete.

But Israel knew God more, and knew that God was (is) more. God is beyond the wildest fiercest enemy. He is above every name, every thing. He is timeless, awesome, the creator, the King, the One. Nothing can touch him. He is pure, truth, light, life. When you have God on your side and are living in his promises, who can stand against you? Not even death. On the Cross, Jesus overcame death.

Colossians 2.13-15: When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

Finish with Joshua 1.1-9

After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' aide: "Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them—to the Israelites. I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates—all the Hittite country—to the Great Sea on the west. No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you.

"Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them. Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to

do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.”

Other Verses about taking possession of the land

Deuteronomy 4.1-7

Deuteronomy 5.32 – 6.19

Deuteronomy 8.1-10

Deuteronomy 9.1-6

Deuteronomy 10.12-13

Deuteronomy 12.1-11 and 12.29-32

Deuteronomy 30

Deuteronomy 31.13

Joshua 3

Joshua 4.1-3