

Sermon Series: The Big Picture

Sermon title: Conquest & Settlement

Scripture reading: Joshua 24:14-15

Clearwater Bay International Baptist Church

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We're continuing our series today called **The Big Picture**. What we're trying to do is zoom out and look at some of the major themes of the biblical story. Our aim is to know what the Bible is all about and I hope that when we are finished, you'll be able to summarize the Bible in one sentence.

We started with *Creation* and we saw that God's people were in God's place living under God's rule. Things were just as they were supposed to be in God's kingdom. Tragically, the first people, Adam and Eve rejected God's rule over them and listened to the Serpent instead. And everyone one of us is just like them. We all have inherited their DNA and from our core we reject God's rule over our lives, we self-rule and listen to the Serpent and not God.

But we saw a glimmer of hope in **Genesis 3:15**. God *Promised* that an offspring of Eve would come and that he would crush the serpent's head.

A few weeks ago we looked at the promise to Abraham in **Genesis 12**. It is here that the story of the Bible really starts to unfold, albeit a little at a time. God promises Abraham that he will make a great *people* out of him and that he will give him a *land* through one of his offspring. And God even said that he would bless Abraham so much that all of the nations of the earth would be blessed through his offspring. So, we've been looking for that offspring who will come.

Well, God was faithful to his promise to make a great nation from him. From Abraham's little family of 70 people they became a great nation down in Egypt. But we still haven't found the promised serpent crusher yet.

Where we left off last with brother James preaching was this great nation of people coming out of Egypt and headed toward the land that God had said that he would give them, but there are conditions to them receiving the land.

1. Conditions

First, what we see clearly in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy is that God's blessing is conditional upon God's people listening to God and doing what he says.

In these books, we have the Law. What does God require in the Law? Well, there are lots of them.

If I may, let me sum it up with the New City Catechism 7.

What does the law of God require?

Personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience; that we love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength; and love our neighbor as ourselves. What God forbids should never be done and what God commands should always be done.

As the people move toward the promised land to conquer it and settle in it, this is of utmost importance. In fact, it's not up to their skill or ability to drive out the nations and take the land. It's up to their ability to remember God's word and obey it. That's the key.

In the book of Deuteronomy, the LORD tells them over and over to not forget his word, not turn aside from it and to not abandon him for false gods. They'll be blessed if they keep his word and cursed if they do not.

Look at **Deuteronomy chapter 11 verse 26**.

"See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse; the blessing, if you obey the

commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you today, and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside from the way that I am commanding you today, to go after other gods that you have not known.

Deuteronomy 28 verse 1 lays it out again. Verse 1 through 14 lays out the blessing and verses 15-68 are the curses.

So, they've been forewarned by the LORD through Moses that there are conditions to the covenant and those conditions are clear: keep the word of God.

Now when we get to the book of Joshua chapter 1 it is the same thing. God's commission to Joshua to lead the people to conquer the land is conditional upon God's people being careful to follow God's word.

Joshua 1:7-9 says, "**Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go. 8 This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that**

you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. 9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."

Let me show you just how important following God's word is.

Joshua is the beginning of the section of the bible called the Prophets. And here in the beginning, we see these words, "**This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it.**

Malachi is the last book of the prophets. What does he end with in chapter 4? "**Remember the law of my servant Moses, the statutes and rules that I commanded him"**

Psalms 1 is the first major book in what is called the Writings. What does Psalm 1 say? "**Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat**

of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his word he meditates day and night.”

Just as Adam and Eve would experience God's blessing and live in God's land as long as they heeded God's word and lived under his rule...so shall the children of Israel be able to conquer the land and live in it. There are conditions and the condition is: **hear God's word and do it.**

2. Conquest

Before they fight their first battle against the peoples of Canaan, we have this strange story that tells us a lot about the key to the book. Joshua is walking near Jericho when he meets a man standing there with his sword. Joshua says, 'Are you friend or foe?' And the response is, **'No, but I am the commander of the army of the LORD.'** **Joshua 5:14**

That's a strange response, but it is a key to understanding the whole book. The question is not which side is the angel on...but which side are the people on. Because as the people obey he is for them but as the people disobey he is against them. It is as if the angel is saying, 'The question is which side are you on.' This is echoed later in **Joshua 24:14** when he asks the people a similar question, "Choose which side you're on." More about that later on.

For most of the book of Joshua, the people follow the LORD and they receive God's blessing. In Joshua chapter 7, we do have an example of what happens when they disobey. This is the story of Achan's sin and the defeat by Ai. Achan kept some of the captured loot and lied about it...and because of his sin..the army was defeated and Achan lost his life.

Obedience brings blessing. Disobedience brings cursing. This mandate is given in Deuteronomy, it's illustrated in mostly a positive way in Joshua and negatively in Judges.

The conquest of the land is conditional upon the people obeying God's word and when they don't obey things descend into chaos, which is where we find the nation in Judges.

3. **Chaos**

When we get to the book of Judges, Joshua is gone and it starts out in chapter 1 by saying that the people did not drive out the nations among them as they were commanded.

We have these summarizing words in **Judges 2:10**, which says, **"All that generation also were gathered to their fathers. And there arose another**

generation after them who did not know the LORD or the work that he had done in Israel.”

And then we have the heartbreaking words starting in 2:11.

11 And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals. 12 And they abandoned the Lord, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. They went after other gods, from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed down to them. And they provoked the Lord to anger.

13 They abandoned the Lord and served the Baals and the Ashtaroath. 14 So the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he gave them over to plunderers, who plundered them. And he sold them into the hand of their surrounding enemies, so that they could no longer withstand their enemies.

15 Whenever they marched out, the hand of the Lord was against them for harm, as the Lord had warned, and as the Lord had sworn to them. And they were in terrible distress.

They didn't know the LORD? Really?

They didn't know the work the LORD has done? How could they not? Of course, they *knew* in their heads but not in their hearts.

We are left at the end of Judges with chaos.

“Everyone did that which was right in their own eyes.”

Is there any hope? Will mankind ever be able to live under God’s rule and blessing? Will the promised deliverer from Genesis 3:15 ever arrive? We have to wait and see in the story. But of course, we know the end of the story.

4. Conqueror

Where is Christ in the Conquest & Settlement?

Remember, Jesus said that the law and the prophets speak of himself. (Luke 24:27)

The book of Joshua pushes us toward a *new Joshua* (literally Yeshua). A Joshua who will conquer our greatest enemies: the serpent, sin and death.

We need a new Adam who will crush the serpent. We need a true Israelite who will perfectly live under God’s rule, obeying God perfectly. He is the offspring of Abraham who will bless all the nations. He is Christ. He was tempted like Adam and Eve and like you and me, yet didn’t give in. He lived his whole life without sinning even one time. He lived under God’s rule in every way.

But the way that Christ conquered our greatest enemies was not like Joshua’s earthly battles.

He fought Satan in a different way. As Genesis 3:15 promises, the serpent struck his heel but he crushed the serpent's head. How did he do this?

He purposefully let the authorities kill him on a cross. He was willingly punished and beaten. Satan thought he had won the battle. But his death was a sacrifice offered up to God to pay for the sin of all those who would believe in him.

["Through death he destroyed the one who has the power of death, that is the devil, and delivered all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery."] Hebrews 2:14-15

Death is the penalty for sin. But since he conquered sin...he could not stay dead. God raised him up alive again.

Now, Christ won amazing things for those who will believe in him.

1. He removed what needed to be removed for us to be in right relationship with God, namely our sin. So, now we can be **God's people.**

2. He gave us what we lacked and couldn't provide, namely righteousness. We live under **God's rule & blessing** on his merits and not our own.
3. He gives us eternal life with him in **God's land** that he's preparing for us, namely a new heaven and a new earth.

And those who choose to not trust Christ, who choose to not live under God's rule, will not experience God's blessing, will not be God's people and will not live in God's place for all eternity.

Instead they will experience a cursed, godless and eternal existence with the serpent in *his* place with all those who have loved sin.

Which will you choose?

5. **Challenge**

I mentioned that we'd get to Joshua's famous speech in chapter 24:14, where he lays before them (and us) a challenge and a choice.

14 "Now therefore fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. 15 And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will

serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

We aren't much different than the people in Joshua & Judges. We know the LORD's works. We've seen him do great things. We know that we are blessed when we obey and things fall apart when we don't. Yet, even as believers we struggle to faithfully live under God's rule.

What are the things that your fathers served.. 'beyond the river'?

What are the idols of your family?

What does your people care about?

What are the idols of the culture around you that are sucking you in? Baal and Ashteroth are alive and well.

Do you giggle at what God calls wicked?

Are you entertained by filth and impurity, foul language and uncleanness? Is there a hint of immorality among those who name the name of

Christ?

Put it away from you...and serve the LORD..you and your house.