

# THE JOURNEY OF ISRAEL

By Brian Bailey

To gain an understanding of our spiritual journey through life we must study the journey of the children of Israel. Their journey started in Egypt, went through the wilderness into the Promised Land, and eventually led the people of God to Mount Zion. This historical journey undertaken thousands of years ago is a prophetic picture of our spiritual development as Christians. It portrays the journey of a believer from salvation to full spiritual maturity when we become mature fathers and mothers in the faith. It serves as a road map to show us where we have come from, where we are now, and where we are going.

## THE PLAN FOR THE JOURNEY

To understand the journey of Israel we must realize that God planned this journey long before it took place. The Lord promised Abraham and his descendants full possession of the land of Canaan, but He did not give it to them right away. A famine forced Jacob (Abraham's grandson) and his family to relocate to Egypt. There the family of Jacob (who had been renamed Israel by God) remained in Egypt, growing into a nation until a new Pharaoh ascended to the throne who imposed slavery upon Abraham's descendants.

In Exodus 3:7-10 we read that God saw the afflictions of the children of Israel, and that He was deeply concerned for them. Be encouraged, beloved: God sees the heartaches that you are experiencing and He has not forgotten you. Remember, God does not always answer our prayers immediately, just as in the case of the Israelites. However, in his perfect time, He will deliver you from your affliction because He is a loving and merciful God.

God's promise to deliver Israel in Exodus 3:8 reveals a very important truth: *"So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey...."* The Lord took the children of Israel OUT OF Egyptian bondage to lead them INTO a land flowing with milk and honey.

When God delivers us from a problem, situation, or bondage, His desire is to lead us into something better for our lives. Deliverance is essentially a two-step process: 1) being delivered from something bad, and 2) being brought into something good. It is essential that we grasp this truth for our own lives. God not only wants to deliver us from this world, but He wants to bring us into the fullness of our spiritual inheritance.

## THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE JOURNEY

Let us consider the preparations of the children of Israel. The Lord had to orchestrate events to cause them to be willing to leave Egypt. One of the reasons that the Lord caused the taskmasters to afflict them was to make them uncomfortable in Egypt. Otherwise, they would not have wanted to leave. Several things took place that prepared the children of Israel to leave Egypt: they were under bondage to an evil king (Ex. 1:10), cruel taskmasters afflicted them (Ex. 1:11), and their lives became bitter (Ex. 1:14).

This can have a spiritual application to us as believers as well. To illustrate this, a pastor was sent to a church that was filled with problems. He asked us to pray for him because there was a division in the church and many people were leaving. The Lord spoke to my wife and me in prayer that the problem was the immorality of the previous pastor. My friend said to me, "That is true, but he confessed it."

We prayed again and the Lord showed us the spirit of immorality that was still over the church. The Lord revealed to us that even though the pastor had repented, the church members had not forgiven their former pastor. Their unforgiveness caused the spirit of immorality to remain, and that spirit brought in adultery, lust, rebellion, jealousy, hardness of heart, division, deceit, and discouragement. All of these spirits (or taskmasters) were operating under the king or ruling spirit of immorality over the church.

After this the former pastor visited the church and offered his repentance again. This time it was accepted, and this released the church to move on

into revival. Within a very short time the church doubled in size.

The point I am trying to make is that these evil spirits can be allowed by God to afflict us for a time, like the affliction of the Israelites. However, it is to cause us to cry out to God and be ready to journey on with God. Believe for a complete breakthrough in your life, in the lives of your loved ones, and in the people of your church so that they are completely free to serve the Lord with their whole hearts.

### PHARAOH'S RESISTANCE

After the Israelites all embraced the message that God was going to deliver them, Moses and Aaron went and declared the word of the Lord to Pharaoh. His reaction was to reject the message (Ex. 5:1-4).

Let us consider the significance of Egypt and Pharaoh. Egypt's national monuments are the pyramids, which are funeral houses. Egypt, which specialized in the embalming of the dead, represents death. It also represents this world, because the end of this world is death and hell (Rom. 6:21).

A serpent (which represents Satan) was engraved on Pharaoh's crown. Therefore, Pharaoh represents Satan, the prince of this world. Pharaoh can also represent the governing demonic spirit over our city or locality. If the Lord promises to give you your city or locality for Christ, know that you will receive opposition from the devil. We cannot receive a spiritual breakthrough until we have broken the power of the governing spirit over our area.

In addition to rejecting Moses' message of deliverance, Pharaoh retaliated by increasing the burdens of the Israelites (Ex. 5:5-10). Pharaoh instructed the taskmasters to increase the labor and burdens of the Israelites. They also beat the Israelites when they were unable to complete this impossible task.

Therefore, instead of improving, things became worse for the Israelites. They blamed Moses and Aaron and even asked God to judge them (Ex. 5:20,21). We must realize that Satan will oppose us when we seek to obey the voice of the Lord. Situations often get worse before they improve. Our burdens or problems may increase after God speaks to us. We need to have endurance until the end because the enemy must be confronted until his power is broken.

In Exodus 7 we read about the ten plagues that God sent to Egypt. We must understand the reason for these judgments. Not only was God judging Pharaoh and the Egyptians through these plagues, but He was also judging their gods (Ex. 12:12, Num. 33:4). God's primary battle is against the gods of this world, who receive their power and influence from Satan.

During the time of the ten plagues Pharaoh made four proposals for how the children of Israel could leave Egypt. However, each of them had conditions attached and were rejected by God and Moses. Satan uses subtle forms of compromise to try to ensnare the people of God, but we must resist compromise just as Moses did.

The Lord instituted the Passover just prior to the final plague, the slaying of the firstborn. The Passover represents salvation by the blood of the lamb because the blood on the doorposts of the Hebrew homes preserved their lives (Ex. 12:13). We need to make much of the blood of Jesus Christ when we confront the enemy. The power of the blood in the land of Egypt saved the entire nation of Israel!

### COMING OUT OF EGYPT

After the final plague Pharaoh commanded the children of Israel to leave Egypt (Ex. 12:31,32). Then Exodus 12:35-36 records that the Egyptians gave the Israelites an abundance of gold, silver, and clothing on their way out of the land. This illustrates the Biblical truth that enrichment comes after trials. It is a principle of God that He enriches us after trials. After Job's trial, the Lord enriched him and blessed him with double what he had before his trial (Job 42:11). We also often need a liberation of finances so that we can fulfill God's purposes for our lives.

After this, however, Pharaoh's army pursued the Israelites (Ex. 14:5-12). When the children of Israel saw the army they said they wished they had never left Egypt (Ex. 14:10-12). They resented Moses for leading them out. When troubles come, many Christians have the same attitude. They want to return to the world. It is a sad fact of life that many people, even Christians, love their bondages and do not want to be delivered from them (2 Cor. 11:20).

A number of years ago, several ministers prayed for a lady who had about sixty demons. By God's grace, through prayer we were able to cast out all of the demons except one. We knew that God wanted to

deliver this lady and that He was able to do so. We said to her, “You can be delivered if you want to be delivered.” However, she did not want to be delivered of that last demon. She wanted to hold on to her bondage, so there was nothing more we could do for her. Later that night she said to her friends, “I could have been delivered tonight, but I wanted to hold on to my bondage.”

The Lord then divided the waters of the Red Sea and the children of Israel passed over on dry ground. As the Egyptian army pursued the Israelites, the Lord caused the waters of the Red Sea to come crashing back down, drowning the Egyptians. God saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians (Ex. 14:21-28).

The crossing of the Red Sea is a very significant event in history. It contains many spiritual lessons. Primarily, the crossing of the Red Sea symbolizes water baptism (1 Cor.10:2). The Red Sea separated the children of Israel from Egypt, delivered them from their bondages, and broke Pharaoh’s power over them. Water baptism accomplishes these things in us.

So we see that while the crossing of the Red Sea accomplished many things in the lives of the Israelites, it did not remove the love for Egypt in their hearts. Throughout the wilderness journey, the Israelites wanted to return to Egypt whenever something went wrong. They were out of Egypt, but Egypt was not out of them. It is the same with water baptism. It separates us from the world, but it does not completely purify our hearts from the love of this world.

### THROUGH THE WILDERNESS

The children of Israel then entered into the wilderness section of their journey. After the Red Sea, they traveled for three days in the wilderness and were unable to find water. When they found water at Marah, it was bitter and they could not drink it. The people then murmured against Moses (Ex. 15:22-24).

There will be times of bitterness in our journey as believers. We must know how to overcome bitterness in our personal lives because bitterness is very dangerous. A root of bitterness in one person can defile many others (Heb. 12:15). Bitterness reproduces very quickly.

Bitterness comes into our lives when we fail to appropriate God’s grace to overcome disappointments and hurts. There is always available grace for every trial and for every circumstance. It is always possible to overcome and triumph.

What is the key to overcoming bitterness? The bitter waters of Marah became sweet when Moses cast a tree into them (Ex. 15:25). The tree is a symbol of the cross upon which Christ was crucified. We can overcome bitterness by going to the cross of Christ. We must surrender our rights and give all of our bitter feelings to the Lord. Then we must forgive the person who wronged us and forget the wrong that was done to us. As we do those three things, the Lord will purify our hearts of bitterness.

The Israelites arrived at Mount Sinai in the third month (Ex. 19:1-2), which is the month in which the Feast of Pentecost was celebrated. It was here that the presence and fire of God came down. Mount Sinai therefore represents the Pentecostal experience.

In Exodus 19:5, the Lord declared the Israelites would obtain all His blessings “*if you will obey my voice.*” The condition to all of God’s blessings was obedience. We must obey God in order to receive the Holy Spirit. Often there is an area of disobedience in a person’s life that hinders them from receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

A man was once praying for the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the Lord said to him, “Go to the other room and release your bird from the bird cage.” In the cage he had a wild bird that he had captured. Even though it was only a bird, how could the preacher ask for liberty when he was holding something else in captivity? As soon as he released the bird, he was filled with the Spirit and began speaking in other tongues. Sometimes God requires an act of obedience before He will give us the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

While still on Mount Sinai, the Lord gave Moses the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20). The Ten Commandments still have significance for our lives. Jesus did not come to destroy the law, He came to fulfill it (Mat. 5:17). We must also fulfill the law, and we can do this by walking in the Spirit and denying our carnal desires (Rom. 8:4). When we are filled with the Spirit, we should receive a fresh appreciation and respect for God’s laws.

### NEARING THE PROMISED LAND

After several more trials the Lord led the children of Israel to Kadesh Barnea, the border of the Promised Land. They had been in the wilderness about two years after leaving Egypt. The Lord also will lead us into wilderness times to deal with things in our lives that can only be done while we are in the wilderness.

While at Kadesh Barnea, the Lord instructed Moses to send twelve spies to view the land (Num. 13:2). The twelve spies spent forty days in the Promised Land. When they returned, ten of the spies gave an evil report (Num. 13:27,28). They testified that the land of Canaan was a land flowing with “milk and honey” just as God had promised, but said that they were unable to possess the land because their enemies were greater than them.

When God gives us an inheritance, there will be spiritual enemies that we have to defeat in order to possess it. We must not fear evil spirits. Our enemies are afraid of us (1 John 4:4); their only hope is that we do not know it. We must overcome fear of the devil and evil spirits, and it is the love of God that will enable us to overcome fear (1 John 4:18).

The negative report of the ten spies discouraged the whole congregation of Israel (Num. 14:1-4). The congregation’s solution was that they wanted to return to Egypt. As Christians we must ask the Lord to purify us of the love of the world, otherwise that attraction will pull us back into the world. That is exactly what happened to Demas, as Paul said in 2 Timothy 4:10, “*For Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world.*”

Several years ago while visiting a church in Australia, the Lord quickened this passage from Numbers 14 to me for the church. I admonished them that God had a purpose for them and wanted them to move on with Him. Then during prayer one of the elders stood up and prayed: “Lord, we are well content with the wilderness. We do not want to go on. We are comfortable here.” This elder had an evil spirit of unbelief and he negatively influenced the whole church.

Several years later I went back to the same church for the installation of another pastor. Then the Lord gave me a flashback of that prayer meeting seven years before. I said to the church, “That evil spirit in that elder stopped you from going on with God, but now God is appointing another pastor. He will take you into God’s purposes for this church.” The whole

congregation began weeping and acknowledged that they had hindered their pastors. They consecrated themselves to move on with God, and from that time the church experienced a real move of the Holy Spirit.

Not all of the twelve spies adopted a negative attitude. Joshua and Caleb were different. They were full of faith. Caleb was confident in the Lord that they were able to possess the Promised Land (Num. 13:30). The Lord said that Caleb possessed “*another spirit, and hath followed me fully*” (Num. 14:24). Caleb and Joshua, therefore, would be allowed to possess the Promised Land in time.

The key to inheriting the promises of God for our lives is to please the Lord (Num. 17:28). If we please the Lord and He delights in us, He will fulfill all of His promises. We should always seek to do the things that please the Lord.

The Lord’s punishment for the disobedience of the Israelites was that they would not enter into the Promised Land, but would die in the wilderness. The whole generation would wander in the wilderness for forty years and then die (Number 14:29-34). The only two people from the generation (above the age of twenty) that came out of Egypt who entered the Promised Land were Joshua and Caleb, the two faithful spies.

There were ten main trials or tests in the wilderness, and the children of Israel failed every one of them (Num. 14:22). It is very important for us to study the ten trials of the children of Israel in the wilderness because we will also be faced with the same trials in our Christian walk. Every trial should be a steppingstone to greater heights in God. However, because the children of Israel failed their tests, the tests became stumblingblocks that hindered them from moving on with God. Therefore we must seek to pass the trials and tests that we experience so that we will succeed in life.

Numbers 32 records the sad account of the 2 ½ tribes who chose their inheritance on the wrong side of the Jordan River. The real promises and blessings of God were across the Jordan River, but these tribes were content to remain where they were. They settled for second best because they had many cattle and thought that the land east of the Jordan River was a good place for them. Their hearts were attached to the things of this world. Years later when God judged

the nation of Israel, it was these same 2 ½ tribes which were the first to be taken into captivity.

One of the heartaches of leadership is that people determine the level of inheritance they receive. Not everyone in the Body of Christ obtains God's best for their lives. We want to strive for God's best for our lives and not stop short, even as Paul said in Philippians 3:14, "*I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*"

Moses gave his last sermons to Israel at the plains of Moab. He then ascended Mount Pisgah and beheld the Promised Land (Deut. 34:1-3). In Deuteronomy 34:4-6, Moses died and God Himself buried the body of Moses.

### CROSSING THE JORDAN

The crossing of Jordan was a major turning point in Israel's journey. It was a new day for them in every respect. The old generation and leader had died and a new generation and leader had arisen. The wilderness tests were over and the Promised Land awaited them. Crossing Jordan was a major step toward their ultimate destination, Mount Zion.

We read in Joshua 3:15-16 that the waters of the Jordan overflowed in the time of harvest all the way to the city of Adam. The fact that the waters of Jordan covered the city of Adam when the children of Israel crossed the Jordan signifies that the crossing of the Jordan is a spiritual symbol of our sinful Adamic nature being dealt with whereby we become "dead to sin" (Rom. 6:6). Therefore, the crossing of the Jordan represents the experience of being "dead to sin," whereby our old Adamic nature is crucified with Christ.

After the Israelites left Egypt, they were out of Egypt, but the love of Egypt was not out of them. However, after they crossed the Jordan River, the Lord purified them of the love of Egypt. God broke the power of Egypt over the Israelites at the Jordan River (Jos. 5:8-9). They no longer wanted to return to Egypt, which represents this world. God did something in their hearts.

Romans 6:6 says that we need to "know" that we have been crucified with Christ and are dead to sin. Many years ago, the Lord was dealing with many issues in my life, speaking to me about being "dead to sin." One morning while I was in my office, I had a vision of Christ upon the cross with His back

toward me. The Spirit of God lifted me up to hang on the cross with Christ. I could see all of the people speaking against Christ. I also saw the veil that was rent in the Temple when Jesus died. Then the vision stopped.

Out of my innermost being came the words from Galatians 2:20, "*I am crucified with Christ.*" At the moment, I knew that my old man had been crucified with Christ. I understood that when Jesus died nearly two thousand years ago, He not only bore my sins, but He also dealt with my old nature. Strength, victory, and indescribable peace filled my heart.

By no means am I implying that you must have a vision or experience like mine. However, it is important that you experience the reality of Romans 6:6 and have a revelation that your sinful nature has been crucified. That revelation will help you resist the temptations of this world and the works of the carnal nature every day of your life.

After we experience Romans 6:6, typified in the journey of Israel by the crossing of the Jordan River, we have power over sin and we no longer have to serve sin. That does not mean that we become infallible or incapable of sinning, but simply that we have new power and strength to overcome our sin nature.

### CIRCUMCISED AT GILGAL

After they crossed the Jordan River, the children of Israel were circumcised at Gilgal. Circumcision represents heart circumcision and the cutting away of the carnal nature that we were born with (Deut 30:6). An uncircumcised person in the Old Testament was considered unclean and could not partake of the blessings and rites of the Jewish faith. Lack of spiritual circumcision represents the fact that the sinful desires, ways, thought patterns, and reactions that we were born with have not been cut away or removed.

The Lord instructed Joshua to circumcise the people because the younger generation had not been circumcised by their parents in the wilderness (Jos. 5:2-5). The New Testament makes it clear that what God requires of believers is spiritual circumcision (Rom. 2:28-29). It is vital that we are spiritually circumcised so we obey God's commandments.

We cannot circumcise our own hearts, but we have to give God permission and access to deal with all of the sin in our lives. We have to expose our hearts to the Lord and surrender to Him everything in our lives that He deals with. We must not resist when God is dealing with issues in our lives, but surrender everything to Him. We must understand that we cannot enter into God's full inheritance for our lives without a circumcised heart.

In 1981, while ministering in New Zealand, I was visited by two angels. One of the angels had a large sword in his hand. The word "circumcision" was written on the bottom of the sword. The other angel wore a sash inscribed with the words, "The Enforcer." The Lord said to me: "I have come to circumcise the hearts of My people, and I will start with the leaders. Those who hearken and yield to My sword of circumcision will move on higher with Me. However, those who do not allow Me to circumcise their hearts will be judged by My angel, the Enforcer."

Before we can all enter into the last day revival, we must allow the Lord to do a thorough work of cleansing in our lives. We must submit to the Lord's work of circumcision in our hearts by His sword, the Word of God.

### POSSESSING THE LAND

The purpose of a "Joshua" ministry is to get the people across the Jordan, and then get them to start possessing the land. To get them into the land they have to be sanctified, but to actually possess the land there will then be battles where we fight against the enemy. The fact that God has cleansed us and cut wrong things out of our lives does not mean to say that we have possessed the land. That is only the preparation so that we can stand against the enemy.

To enable Joshua to overthrow the enemy, the Lord appeared to Joshua as the Captain of the Lord of Hosts in Joshua 5:13-15. Every "Joshua" leader must have a revelation of Christ as the Warrior King. He must know that *"It is not by power or might, but by my spirit"* that the Lord is going to overthrow the enemy (Zech. 4:7). It is by the anointing that we will be able to dispossess the demonic powers and the wickedness that control the nations, to gather a great harvest of souls.

Under Joshua's leadership, the children of Israel did not possess their full inheritance. They were slow in possessing the land of Canaan (Jos. 13:1, Judg. 1:27-36). The Israelites were satisfied to settle for partial victory. This is also true of the human heart. Many Christians reach a certain level in their walk with the Lord and they are content to dwell there. Israel's ultimate destination, Mount Zion, was not possessed. The Jebusites retained possession of it.

### DAVID CONQUERS ZION

About four hundred years passed before God raised up David to lead Israel into their full inheritance and Mount Zion. The last enemy that God had originally mentioned to Abraham back in Genesis 15:18-21 was the Jebusites. The Jebusites lived in the Promised Land right up to the time of David. Zion was the last and most difficult stronghold to capture. Nevertheless, David took Mount Zion and the city of Jerusalem after receiving his third anointing (2 Sam. 5:3). David brought Israel into complete rest by conquering Mount Zion. Possessing Zion requires a new anointing! After making it his capital, David went on to rule over Israel and over all the surrounding nations from Zion.

### THE VISION OF ZION

We need to realize that the Lord desires to plant an onward vision within all of His people. Zion is the ultimate goal of the Church of Jesus Christ, as the Apostle Paul states in Hebrews 12:22: *"But you have come to Mount Zion..."* The Lord wants to impart the vision of Zion to each one of us.

This vision is something that must be birthed in our hearts. Spiritually, we must be born in Zion. This is made very clear in Psalm 87:5-6: *"And of Zion it will be said, This one and that one were born in her: and the Most High Himself shall establish her. The LORD will record, when he registers the peoples: this one was born there."*

This is a Christ-centered vision. The message of Zion is all about Jesus Christ and having an intimate relationship with Him. It is about having a wholehearted desire and love for the Lord. It causes us to desire to seek Him, behold His beauty, and dwell with Him. If you are pursuing that kind of relationship with Christ, then you are headed toward spiritual Zion! The prize for reaching Zion is Christ

Himself. He is the prize of the high calling. Let us seek to win Christ, even as Paul said (Phil. 3:8).

In conclusion, I would like to recount a vision I had at the beginning of my ministry over fifty years ago. I saw a man walking down a path that led into a beautiful valley filled with joy. The sun shone, birds were singing, and everything seemed so alive. Then the path came to the bottom of a mountain, and the man started to climb the path up the mountain. It was steep but the man persevered, and eventually the path came to a level place.

To the left there was another glorious valley, much more beautiful than the first. Multitudes were in that valley and they cried out when they saw the man, "Come down into our valley for we have the blessing of the Lord." Then a voice sounded from on high, "What they say is true, but if you go down into that valley, you will remain there. Come up higher."

The man continued walking up the path, which by this time had become very steep. Eventually he came to another level place with another valley more glorious than the previous two. A multitude also was in this valley, and they also said to the man, "Come down into our valley for we have the blessing of the Lord." The voice from on high again sounded, "What they say is true, but if you go down into that valley, you will remain there. Come up higher."

The man continued to climb up the mountain. This time, however, the climb was considerably more difficult. At times, he had to crawl on his hands and knees. Finally, after much effort and perseverance, he arrived at the top of the mountain, but there was nothing there. Yet as he patiently waited, the Lord Jesus Christ appeared.

Over the years, the Lord has continued to shed light on the interpretation of this vision. The first valley represents the valley of salvation, filled with joy and light. The second valley represents the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The third valley represents the Feast of Tabernacles and the glorious last day revival. The top of the mountain represents Mount Zion.

All of these experiences along the way—salvation, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and revival—are wonderful, but they are not our goal or resting place. We cannot stop until we get to the top of Mount Zion because the Lord Jesus Christ is waiting for us at the top of the mountain. We must not remain at any certain level or experience in our Christian walk. The

blessings of God must not be our goal; our goal must be to "win Christ" (Phil. 3:8).

## IN OUR OWN SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

The question we should all ask ourselves is: "Lord, where am I on my spiritual journey and what are the next steps You want me to take?" Stop right now and ask God to reveal to you where you are in your own personal journey. You need to know where you have come from, where you are at now, and where you are headed. What is your goal in life? Do you have the vision of winning Christ? If not, ask God to birth it in your heart.

Wherever you are in your spiritual journey, God wants you to keep pressing on. Do not stay at any certain level, or become discouraged, or become lukewarm in your Christian walk. *Keep on pressing on!* That is the underlying theme of this article. Your spiritual journey on earth does not end until you reach heaven.

I pray that this study on the journey of Israel has been a blessing to cause you to continue pressing on until you win Christ. May the Lord richly bless you, dear reader!

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