

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Joshua: God's Faithful Giving Of The Promised Land To Israel

Part IV: Concluding Events Concerning Israel's Inheritance Of The Promised Land, Joshua 22:1-24:33

A. The Unintended Crises Of The Transjordan Inheritance: A Lesson In Dependently Following The Lord (Joshua 22:1-34 et al.)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

There are times when even the very best of intentions, if implemented, can badly backfire:

(1) "When President Obama" recently "announced new 'Clean Power Plan' regulations to help mitigate climate change . . . 170 evangelicals -- pastors, religion professors, non-profit directors and others -- sent an open letter to the president" to offer, in their words, "our support and encouragement for your efforts to overcome the climate challenge." (Nicholas G. Hahn III, "The Religion of Climate Change," The Wall Street Journal, August 7, 2015, p. A9) A key concern by climate change activists is their fear of future alleged crop failures with the resulting harm to the world's food supply if the climate change issue is not addressed (Wendy Koch, "Study: Crop failures to increase with climate change," October 8, 2010, usatoday.com), so these evangelicals would have meant well by their action.

Such a "teaming up of church and state on environmental issues has become common," but it can badly backfire for the church: the EPA recently "awarded an \$84,000 grant to the University of Michigan" to give the government, in the grant's words, "insights into the role of religion and faith communities in motivating environmental behavior," Ibid. Thus, "(t)he real purpose" of the grant is to help the government "figure out how to better use religious leaders as political pawns" (Ibid.), so the 170 evangelical leaders who politically join the president are naively putting themselves at risk of being manipulated by the government to the loss of their spiritual integrity.

(2) Good intentions can backfire at the local church level, too: many Gospel-preaching churches have let secular groups use their facilities to appear to be winsome to the world and enhance their outreach. Yet, the world is quickly sanctioning same-sex marriage, what Scripture clearly condemns, so such churches risk being perceived as hypocritical to the world to the harm of their testimony if they do not also let same-sex groups use their facilities.

Need: *So we ask, "If good intentions can backfire even for Christians, how can we avoid such entrapments?!"*

I. The Transjordan tribes TWICE faced unintended trials in implementing their well-intended plans:

- A. The Transjordan tribes faced unintended trouble while returning to their tribal inheritances in Joshua 22:1-34:
1. When Joshua dismissed the warriors of the Transjordan tribes who had kept their promise to cross the Jordan with the other 9 1/2 tribes and help them conquer their lands (Joshua 22:1-9), the Transjordan warriors built a large altar by the Jordan River before returning their homes east of the river, Joshua 22:10.
 2. However, that deed was at tension with Scripture, for Leviticus 17:8-9 made sacrificing apart from use of the tabernacle altar a capital offense, so the 9 1/2 tribes prepared to fight the Transjordan men, Jos. 22:11-12. They confronted the Transjordan men about their altar, expressing outrage that they were evidently heading into apostasy versus the lesson of Israel's Baal of Peor idolatry in Numbers 25:1-9 and of Achan's sin in Joshua 7:1-26, events where apostasy threatened God's blessing for all Israel, Joshua 22:13-20.
 3. The Transjordan warriors replied that they were *not* practicing apostasy, but that they had built the altar as a sign to the other tribes that though they were separated from them in the Transjordan lands, they were still part of the community of Israel that lived west of the Jordan River, Joshua 22:21-29.
 4. This explanation pleased the 9 1/2 western tribes, so civil war was avoided, Joshua 22:30-34.
- B. The Transjordan tribes faced unintended trouble while initially seeking to inherit their lands, Num. 32:1-27:
1. In Numbers 32:1-5 when the Transjordan tribes approached Moses to ask that they inherit the Transjordan lands, they acted in tension with Scripture, for Moses charged them with repeating the sin of Kadesh-barnea in discouraging the other tribes from conquering their land west of the Jordan, Numbers 32:6-15.
 2. Only when the Transjordan men promised to cross the Jordan and help the other tribes conquer their lands west of the river did Moses agree to grant them the Transjordan lands as an inheritance, Num. 32:16-27.

II. The CAUSE for these unintended troubles was FAILURE DEPENDENTLY to FOLLOW the LORD:

- A. Back in Numbers 32:1, we note that when the Transjordan men saw (*hineh*, "Behold!"; Kittel, Bib. Heb., p. 251; B. D. B., A Heb.-Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 243-244) the Transjordan land, they wanted it, Num. 32:2-5.
- B. Again in Joshua 22:10 when they came to the Jordan and saw their geographical isolation, they built the altar.
- C. Thus, in twice acting on their own observations in tension with God's Word, acting independently of the Lord, they function based upon selfish ambition, and that left them open for defeat in the angelic conflict:

1. James 3:14 ESV, NIV warns against selfish ambition (*eritheia*, Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 309) and jealousy (*zelos*, Ibid., p. 338), for they are marked by "demonic" (*daimoniodes*, Ibid., p. 168) activity and "disorder" (*akatastasia*, Ibid., p. 29) and every "evil, base, worthless, bad" (*phaulos*, Ibid., p. 862) "thing, event, matter" (*pragma*, Ibid., p. 703-704), James 3:15-16 ESV, NIV.
 2. So, even well-intentioned plans, if implemented apart from dependently following the Lord and at tension with His Word, arise from at least selfish ambition, and if applied to life, are marked by demonic activity, disorder and every evil, base, worthless and bad thing, leaving one open for defeat in the angelic conflict!
- D. Thus, the Transjordan men **should** have *dependently followed* God as revealed in His Word for sure blessing:
1. These men should **not** have decided to build an altar by the Jordan for any reason, for there was only one altar that Scripture indicated they would ever need -- the altar at the tabernacle, Leviticus 17:8-9.
 2. Yet, to have avoided ever being motivated to build an altar by the Jordan in the first place, the Transjordan men should have waited on God to appoint them the land they should inherit, not choose it themselves:
 - a. The motivation behind the Transjordan warriors' building the altar by the Jordan arose out of their realizing in preparing to cross back east over the river how geographically very separated they were from the other tribes: "Mountains on each side" of the Jordan "rise to heights above 2,000 feet and the Jordan Valley nestled in between is in effect a great trench 5 to 13 miles wide. During a part of the year the intense heat greatly discourages travelers" in that valley, Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 365.
 - b. Thus, their choice of the Transjordan lands as an inheritance strained their ability to have a rapport with the rest of Israel and regularly to worship the Lord at His tabernacle that was located west of the Jordan.
 - c. Had they then waited on God to show them where He wanted them to live, they would have avoided the strain that led to their difficulties first with Moses and then with the other 9 1/2 tribes west of the Jordan.
- III. Finally, history proved that the geographical isolation of these tribes did INDEED contribute to their early apostasy with God's resulting discipline in the form of foreign invaders, Ibid., p. 356; Deuteronomy 28:15-26. Thus, the choice of the Transjordan lands as an inheritance eventually badly backfired.**

Lesson: *By implementing even well-intentioned plans versus dependently following the Lord as revealed in His Word, the Transjordan tribes left themselves open for failure in the angelic conflict and eventual early apostasy.*

Application: *(1) May we trust in Christ to be saved, John 3:16. (2) Then, (a) may we rely on the Holy Spirit's power for behavior control (Gal. 5:16-23) (b) dependently to follow the Lord in His Word for His secure blessing.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

In our sermon introduction, we cited two cases where Christians risked facing unedifying problems regardless of good intentions, and in each case, *dependently heeding Scripture* would have **avoided** the problem involved:

(1) In the case of the 170 evangelical leaders who left themselves vulnerable to government manipulation by politically joining with the president on the climate change issue, we note that (a) God in Genesis 8:22 right after the worldwide Noahic Flood promised man that as long the earth remained, "sowing" (*zera'*, B. D. B., A Heb.-Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 282-283) and "harvesting; harvest" (*qasir*, Ibid., p. 894), cold and heat, summer and winter and day and night would not cease. (b) Though the world with the universe will pass away in great heat (2 Peter 3:10-13), that event occurs at the Great White Throne judgment (Revelation 20:11), and that comes after the Millennial Kingdom long after the Church is raptured! Thus, God has promised that man will have the food he needs, complete with sowing and harvesting operations, until that time that comes long after Christians are removed by God from the earth, meaning that getting involved in "climate change" politics is a pointless exercise for the Christian! Avoiding "climate change" politics in turn helps to keep believers free from ideological manipulation by the secular government!

(2) In the case of Gospel-preaching churches that let secular groups use their facilities, but now face the threat of appearing to be discriminatory before the world if they prohibit same-sex groups from using their facilities, heeding 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 would have led such bodies not to let their facilities to be used by any secular groups, for believers must not be unequally yoked with the unsaved! Heeding that directive would have helped preserve the churches from the threat of being charged with unfair discrimination when the world around them sanctions same-sex marriage, for they would have consistently maintained a "for-church-only" rule for the use of their buildings. In the end, they would have better protected their testimony and credibility by heeding 2 Corinthians 6:14-18.

May we trust in Christ for salvation. Then, may we rely on the Holy Spirit to resist heeding our own plans, opting instead DEPENDENTLY to FOLLOW the Lord's leading through His Word for secure blessing.