**Joshua and the Southern Campaign: Actualizing God’s Promise to Abraham**

**Pastor Emeritus Joe Fuiten, April 21, 2021**

In recent weeks we have been following Joshua in his battle for the Promised Land. Since we have just passed Passover and are headed toward Pentecost I want to connect tonight’s teaching out of Joshua 10 back to the larger events of Passover and Pentecost. There is a link between the battle for the Promised Land with Passover and Pentecost. All three events are linked spiritually.

According to the Sages of Judaism God instituted the counting of the Omer in Leviticus and Deuteronomy but it actually began with the counting from the Exodus to Pentecost. They say Moses told them “the whole purpose of their being freed from Egyptian bondage was in order that they should receive the Law at Mt. Sinai, and they eagerly and impatiently looked forward to it, counting each day that brought them nearer to that great moment. On the basis of this, God had later made it a requirement for Jews to count these days of the Omer, which connects Passover, the Festival of Liberation from physical slavery with Pentecost, the Festival of Mattan Torah (true spiritual freedom).”

The purpose of Passover was not completed at Passover but only realized at Pentecost. Passover and the Exodus were great moments but they were not the conclusion of the matter. It was not just “let my people go” but let my people go that they may serve me.” Serving God was the culmination. The culmination of Passover is Pentecost. In a way, the process continues with the return to the Land promised to Abraham.

Moses began the return with the Exodus. God continued the Exodus under his terms with the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai. Moses was an essential part of that although he did not ultimately get to receive his place in the land because of his rebellion against God. However, Joshua was right there next to Moses. When Moses gave his farewell speech in Deuteronomy 34 Joshua accompanied him. “**9***Now Joshua son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom because Moses had laid his hands on him. So the Israelites listened to him and did what the Lord had commanded Moses.”*

The first promise of the land was to Abraham.  The memory of that promise figured heavily in the Exodus. In Exodus 6:2-8 it is said expressly. “*God also said to Moses, "I am the Lord. 3 I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty, but by my name the Lord I did not make myself known to them. 4 I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, where they lived as aliens. 5 Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are enslaving, and I have remembered my covenant. 6 "Therefore, say to the Israelites: 'I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. 7 I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. 8 And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the Lord.'"*

Now it continues in Joshua, a book named for its chief character, Joshua, whose name means "Jehovah is salvation" (The Greek form of this name is Jesus.) The Salvation first expressed in the Exodus and continued at Sinai, is further continued in the person of Joshua (Jesus) as they retake the land originally promised to Abraham. Joshua was some 400 years after Abraham but the promise remained as true as the day God first made it. Tonight’s study begins with the southern campaign of Joshua’s effort.

***Joshua 10:28-43***

***28****That day Joshua took Makkedah. He put the city and its king to the sword and totally destroyed everyone in it. He left no survivors. And he did to the king of Makkedah as he had done to the king of Jericho.* ***29****Then Joshua and all Israel with him moved on from Makkedah to Libnah and attacked it.****30****The Lord also gave that city and its king into Israel’s hand. The city and everyone in it Joshua put to the sword. He left no survivors there. And he did to its king as he had done to the king of Jericho.* ***31****Then Joshua and all Israel with him moved on from Libnah to Lachish; he took up positions against it and attacked it.****32****The Lord gave Lachish into Israel’s hands, and Joshua took it on the second day. The city and everyone in it he put to the sword, just as he had done to Libnah.****33****Meanwhile, Horam king of Gezer had come up to help Lachish, but Joshua defeated him and his army—until no survivors were left.* ***34****Then Joshua and all Israel with him moved on from Lachish to Eglon; they took up positions against it and attacked it.****35****They captured it that same day and put it to the sword and totally destroyed everyone in it, just as they had done to Lachish.* ***36****Then Joshua and all Israel with him went up from Eglon to Hebron and attacked it.****37****They took the city and put it to the sword, together with its king, its villages and everyone in it. They left no survivors. Just as at Eglon, they totally destroyed it and everyone in it.* ***38****Then Joshua and all Israel with him turned around and attacked Debir.****39****They took the city, its king and its villages, and put them to the sword. Everyone in it they totally destroyed. They left no survivors. They did to Debir and its king as they had done to Libnah and its king and to Hebron.* ***40****So Joshua subdued the whole region, including the hill country, the Negev, the western foothills and the mountain slopes, together with all their kings. He left no survivors. He totally destroyed all who breathed, just as the Lord, the God of Israel, had commanded.****41****Joshua subdued them from Kadesh Barnea to Gaza and from the whole region of Goshen to Gibeon.****42****All these kings and their lands Joshua conquered in one campaign, because the Lord, the God of Israel, fought for Israel.* ***43****Then Joshua returned with all Israel to the camp at Gilgal.*

The entire effort is matter-of-factly presented even though it was a rather bloody affair. The important emphasis is that “the Lord, the God of Israel, fought for Israel.” This was God’s doing in fulfillment of promises originally made to Abraham but now appropriated via Joshua. Although this was 3400 years ago, the struggle continues to this day and will continue until Jesus returns to defeat the encirclement of Jerusalem.

The pictures show some of the remains of various cities taken by Joshua in this campaign.

For the remaining portion I would like to use maps to tell the story of God’s promises to Abraham and how that has played out over the centuries.

Many Jews were deported from Israel in the Babylonian Captivity in 586 BC. Although many came back to Israel, as the Bible records, a large number also lived in other parts of the world. It is estimated that in the first century AD an estimated 5,000,000 Jews lived outside Palestine, about four-fifths of them within the Roman Empire. Diaspora Jews outnumbered the Jews in Palestine even before the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in the year 70 AD. In the centuries following Jews lived all over the world including such places as Persia or Iran, Spain, France, Germany, Poland, Russia, and the United States. In fact, by 1880 only about 25,000 Jews actually lived in what is now Israel.

We are living in the time of the return of the Jews to the land God Promised Abraham. . We are seeing the fulfillment of Zephaniah 2:1-2 “***Gather together****, gather together, O shameful nation, 2 before the appointed time arrives and that day sweeps on like chaff, before the fierce anger of the LORD comes upon you, before the day of the LORD's wrath comes upon you.”* The self-gathering gives way to the Lord gathering them. That is found in Zephaniah 3:19-20 “*At that time I will deal with all who oppressed you; I will rescue the lame and gather those who have been scattered. I will give them praise and honor in every land where they were put to shame.20 At that time* ***I will gather you****; at that time I will bring you home. I will give you honor and praise among all the peoples of the earth when I restore your fortunes before your very eyes," says the LORD.* (NIV)

It is likely, given the vast numbers of Jews who have returned to the land of Abraham, that we are already in the final stages of God’s gathering those who have been scattered. Notably, God says he will deal with all those who have “oppressed you.” The fortunes of the Jews will be restored yet again and God will be the one who helps that just as he did with Joshua in chapter 10.