

## **MATTERS OF THE HEART – POSSESSING THE LAND**

### **INTRODUCTION**

We have recently been away. The first week was holiday, but in the second week, Cheryl came home and I stayed at the coast. The purpose was to seek the Lord's face for the church. It turned out that God dealt with my own life instead. It became clear to me that there are areas in my life where my heart needs attention.

**Proverbs 4:23** (NLT) Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.

For me to be successful in my own walk with God, and also for me to be a good pastor & shepherd for our church, I need to have a right heart.

Not only will my heart determine the level of my relationship with God, but it will also determine the very outcome of my life. The same applies to all of us. This morning's message is titled: Issues of the heart – Possessing the Land. I believe that the attitude of our heart can go so far as determining whether we will possess our promised land!

### **MESSAGE**

Let us look at what our Promised Land is – firstly as a church, but also as individuals.

### **AS A CHURCH**

Here are some prophetic promises God has given us as a church:

Last year when we had the Shine Conference God spoke to me about leading us as a people into the land He has given us.

- **Joshua 1:6** (NLT) "Be strong and courageous, for **you are the one who will lead these people** to possess **all** the land I swore to their ancestors I would give them.
- To possess **ALL** the land **He swore to our ancestors** that He would give them.

God has a "Promised Land" for this congregation – To determine what it is, we need to look into the promises God has given us as a church over the years:

- The latter glory will be greater than the former.
- **God has a people in this city** (Acts 18:10b) – God gave us this promise at the beginning of 2015 as we held our annual Daniel fast.
- Pastor Pat told me about the day that our current property was chosen, a word was given that this was the property **God had chosen to place His name.**

- **Nehemiah 1:9** (NLT) But if you return to me and obey my commands and live by them, then even if you are exiled to the ends of the earth, I will bring you back to **the place I have chosen for my name to be honoured.**'
- God's name is not only placed here, but here it will be honoured.
- Not only that, but He is bringing back the exiles (the people we have lost over the years) – even from the ends of the earth.

At the same time I came across this scripture:

**Isaiah 60:22** (NLT) The smallest family will become a thousand people, and the tiniest group will become a mighty nation. At the right time, I, the Lord, will make it happen."

- This is a promise of exponential growth - we have been averaging between 60 and 80 people in our morning services – a fairly small congregation – we should be praying and expecting this multiplication to take place.

***Strategic impact, growth, fruitfulness, people returning and even more importantly, God's presence – this is a description of our promised land as a church.***

## **AS INDIVIDUALS**

God has a Promised Land for each of our individual lives – In Jeremiah 29:11, God promises us a future and a hope. Some examples could be:

- A strong, close knit family.
- Financial security.
- A calling into successful ministry.
- A blessed business.
- Health and strength.

***The question we need to ask this morning is this: Are we truly experiencing life in the promised land? Can we say that we are living in a land of milk and honey? Or are we still just dreaming of our promised land, hoping that one day, in the sweet by and bye, we will finally get there.***

***How many of us can truly say that we have possessed, and are enjoying the benefits of our Promised Land?***

Except for Joshua and Caleb, none of the first group of Israelites that stood on the doorstep to their promised land received it. Are we at risk of the same tragic result? I believe the answer lays in the condition of our hearts!

**THEY MISSED OUT DUE TO THE CONDITION OF THE HEARTS!**

**Numbers 13:1-2**(NLT) The Lord now said to Moses, 2 “Send out men to explore the land of Canaan, the land I am giving to the Israelites. Send one leader from each of the twelve ancestral tribes.”

**Numbers 13:1-2**(NLT) Moses gave the men these instructions as he sent them out to explore the land: “Go north through the Negev into the hill country. 18 See what the land is like, and find out whether the people living there are strong or weak, few or many. 19 See what kind of land they live in. Is it good or bad? Do their towns have walls, or are they unprotected like open camps? 20 Is the soil fertile or poor? Are there many trees? Do your best to bring back samples of the crops you see.” (It happened to be the season for harvesting the first ripe grapes.)

Did you notice God’s words? “Send out men to explore the land of Canaan, the land I am giving to the Israelites.

- God didn’t say, “Go and see if the land is ok...He said go and look at the land I am giving you!”
- Go and find out about the land – see what it’s like, see what the people are like – but remember – God had given them the land!

They spied out the land, they found it was good.

- Yes, there were fortified cities that would need to be defeated.
- Yes there were giants that would have to be slain.
- No one ever said that taking the Promised Land would be easy!
- But the land was amazingly fruitful and beautiful – imagine a clump of grapes so big that two men have to carry it.

**Numbers 13:27-28**(NLT) This was their report to Moses: “We entered the land you sent us to explore, and it is indeed a bountiful country—a land flowing with milk and honey. Here is the kind of fruit it produces. 28 But the people living there are powerful, and their towns are large and fortified. We even saw giants there, the descendants of Anak!

**Here the spies reveal the condition of their heart “It’s a bountiful country but...”**

**Numbers 13:30-33**(NLT) But Caleb tried to quiet the people as they stood before Moses. “Let’s go at once to take the land,” he said. “We can certainly conquer it!” 31 But the other men who had explored the land with him disagreed. “We can’t go up against them! They are stronger than we are!” 32 So they spread this bad report about the land among the Israelites: “The land we traveled through and explored will devour anyone who goes to live there. All the people we saw were huge. 33 We even saw giants there, the descendants of Anak. Next to them we felt like grasshoppers, and that’s what they thought, too!”

- But their hearts were fearful.
- But they had forgotten that God had said, “I have given you the land”.

They had forgotten all the miracles they had already seen God do for them!

- So they spread a bad report – they even exaggerated “all the people we saw were huge.
- This fruitful beautiful land was described as “The land we traveled through and explored will devour anyone who goes to live there”.
- They confessed fear: “We felt like grasshoppers”.
- They assumed the people saw them as grasshoppers too, “and that’s what they (the people) thought too”.

**This was a spectacular display of hearts lacking faith and full of fear.**

***What about our own heart condition – has God brought us onto the threshold of our promised land and we are standing paralysed by fear and lack of faith, too scared to enter?***

- ***Fear and lack of faith issues of the heart!***
- ***They are the tools the devil uses to rob us of our God-given promises.***
- ***Are we about to lose out on God’s blessings?***
- ***Are we going to say what Caleb did, ““Let’s go at once to take the land,” he said. “We can certainly conquer it!”***

## **THE TRUTH OF THE MATTER**

As Moses speaks to the Lord, the truth is revealed about the people who were living in the promised land:

**Numbers 14:14**(NLT) Now if you destroy them, the Egyptians will send a report to the inhabitants of this land, who have already heard that you live among your people. They know, Lord, that you have appeared to your people face to face and that your pillar of cloud hovers over them. They know that you go before them in the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night.

- They already knew that the Israelites had a great God who lived in their midst and had appeared to them.
- They had seen God’s pillar of cloud by day and fire by night.
- They were already paralysed in fear.

## **THE TRAGEDY OF AN UNBELIEVING HEART**

But the Israelites refused to trust God:

**Numbers 14:1-3** (NLT)Then the whole community began weeping aloud, and they cried all night. 2 Their voices rose in a great chorus of protest against Moses and Aaron. “If only we had died in Egypt, or even here in the wilderness!” they complained. 3 “Why is the Lord taking us to this country

only to have us die in battle? Our wives and our little ones will be carried off as plunder! Wouldn't it be better for us to return to Egypt?"

- God had promised to give them the land.
- But they complained and accused Him of wanting them to die in battle.
- Instead, the 10 spies who gave the negative report died right there (Num. 14:36-37!)
- The entire generation then had to die in the desert except for Caleb and Joshua.

### **They left it too late!**

**Numbers 14:39-40** (NLT) When Moses reported the Lord's words to all the Israelites, the people were filled with grief. 40 Then they got up early the next morning and went to the top of the range of hills. "Let's go," they said. "We realize that we have sinned, but now we are ready to enter the land the Lord has promised us."

- When the people realised that they were wrong and God was going to punish them, they decided that they did want to possess the land but it was too late!

***What has God promised us that possibly scares us? Is our problem possibly an unbelieving heart? When we put off what God is telling us to do, we risk losing out on His promises completely!***

- ***Are we possibly just lazy?***
- ***Is it the pull of the "pleasures" of Egypt (sin) that is holding us back?***
- ***Is our heart condition good or is it bad?***

### **CONCLUSION**

Of all the Israelites over 20 years old, only Caleb and Joshua entered the promised land, but they had to wait 40 years.

This tragedy was the result of issues of the heart. Today my challenge is this:

- Do we have **a heart of faith or a heart of fear?**
- Do we have a **heart that trusts God or a heart of disbelief?**
- Are we willing to make sacrifices and face battles required to possess our promised land – or are we going to remain in the wilderness for the rest of our days?

If we respond in the positive, then let's not wait a moment longer. Let's stand up in faith with strong hearts and right attitudes and possess the land our Father has given us.