

# Joshua

And  
The Land of Promise

by

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## CHAPTER SIX

### THREE SUCCESSIVE DAYS

(Joshua v. 10-12)

*“To feed on Christ is to get his strength into us to be our strength. You feed on the cornfield, and the strength of the cornfield conies into you, and is your strength. You feed on Christ, and then go and live your life; and it is Christ in you that lives your life, that helps the poor, that tells the truth, that fights the battle, and that wins the crown.” - Phillips Brooks*

IN one of his sonnets, Matthew Arnold tells of an interview he had on a day of fierce August sunshine, in Bethnal Green, with a preacher whom he knew, and who looked ill and overworked.

In answer to the inquiry as to how he fared:

“Bravely!” said he; “for I of late have been much cheered with thoughts of Christ, the Living Bread.”

He is not the only human soul who, above the ebb and flow of London storm and tumult, has set up a mark of everlasting light to cheer, and to right its course through the night. For holy souls have ever loved to meditate upon that wonderful power which they possess, of absorbing into themselves the very nature of him who, though he was the Everlasting Son of the Father, became man, that the forces of deity might through him pass out to those who love him.

There is a great difference between the strength which may be supplied from without and that which is assimilated within. To illustrate the first: we tread the cathedral close and examine the mighty buttresses that steady the ancient walls. What though the high embowed roof presses on them with all its weight to make them bulge, they may not stir an inch from the perpendicular so long as those masses of stone, built up without, forbid. To illustrate the second: we must visit the forest glade, where giant oaks withstand the blasts of centuries, because they have incorporated into their hearts the properties of earth and air, becoming robust and sturdy and storm-defying.

There are many ways in which the holy soul derives strength from without.

It is buttressed by remonstrances and appeals; by providences and promises; by the fear of causing grief; and by the incitement of passionate devotion. But if these were all, they would be insufficient. We need to have within ourselves the strong Son of God; to know that the Mightiest is within us, working through us, so that we, even as he, can do all things.

In this old record we may discover without effort the Living Bread under three aspects the Passover; the corn of the land; the manna. Each of these was associated with one of three successive days.

## I. THE PASSOVER

The Passover itself could never be repeated; once for all it lay back in the history of Israel, as a fundamental fact. Only once that Angel, bent on slaying the firstborn; only once the slain lamb and sprinkled blood; only once the Exodus in the gray dawn of history. But the feast of the Passover, held in commemoration of that event, was destined to perpetual repetition until it gave place to a yet more significant symbol; which, in turn, is to fade into the marriage supper, as the love of betrothal fades into that of marriage, and moonlight into dawn.

The feast of Passover was held at Sinai; but not afterward till the forty years had elapsed. In fact, it could not be held whilst the nation, through unbelief and disobedience, was untrue to the covenant. Had it not been distinctly affirmed, amid other provisions, that no uncircumcised person should eat thereof? How, then, was it possible that it should be maintained, when, as we have lately learned, **“all the people that were born in the wilderness, by the way as they came forth out of Egypt, they had not circumcised”**? But directly the circumcising of the people was completed, there was no longer a barrier; and they kept the Passover between **“the two evenings,”** as the sun of the fourteenth day of the month was flinging toward them long shadows from the palm-trees and walls of Jericho.

There were two significant parts of the Passover as it was first instituted: the sprinkling of blood on the doors without; and within, the family gathered around the roasted lamb, and eating it in haste. As, however, years went on and conditions altered, blood was no longer sprinkled on the lintel and door-posts; but the drinking of wine was substituted for that ancient and significant act. And the family gathered round the table to the sacred feast, not merely with the girded loin and staff in hand as befitted pilgrims, but with the leisured restfulness of home.

In point of fact, it was a family meal at which the people reviewed the past with thankfulness, and talked together of that mercy which had been so remarkably displayed in their national history. On reaching the Land of Promise, the thoughts of the people were guided back to the great fact of redemption by blood that lay at the basis of their existence.

And there can never be a moment in the experience of the believer when he can be forgetful of the broken body and the shed blood of his Lord, broken and shed for the remission of sin. However much the Cross may speak of sanctification, its primary message must ever be of justification. It is true that we died with him; but it is also true that he died for us that he was made a curse to bring us blessings.

In Heaven itself the redeemed ones sing of the Lamb who was slain, and amid the raptures of the Golden City adore him who wrought redemption by His Blood.

The other side of the Passover has also a counterpart in our experience.

The Israelites feasted, they drank the light Eastern wine; and in after-days chanted the Hallel, and ate of the flesh of the lamb. The bread was unleavened, and the herbs bitter; but joy preponderated over sorrow. And this is the type of Christian life. **“Christ our Passover hath been sacrificed for us,”** said the Apostle, **“therefore let us keep the feast.”**

He did not refer to any hour or day in the year when those to whom he wrote should give themselves up to joy; but meant us to consider our lives as though the joy of the ancient Jewish feast were lengthened through all our days; so that we are always standing with girded loins, always in the pilgrim attitude, and always feeding on the Lamb of God.

The Lord’s Supper is not simply a memorial of what He did on Calvary, or is doing on the throne; it is a perpetual reminder to the believing heart of its privilege and duty to eat the flesh and drink the Blood of the Son of Man after a spiritual sort. We must eat His flesh, or we shall have no life in us. We must drink His Blood, or we shall not dwell in him, or he in us.

How little we understand the way by which each part of our body takes the particular nourishment it requires from the food we eat! But we know that such is the case; and that bones, muscles, and tissues appropriate their sustenance from the common store.

So, though we may not be able to explain the philosophy of the process, we believe and are sure, that as we hold fellowship with Jesus in quiet, hallowed moments, our weakness absorbs his strength, our impatience his long-suffering, our restlessness his calm, our ignorance his wisdom. But let it ever be borne in mind that as no uncircumcised person was permitted to partake of the Passover, so none who are living in willful sin can feed on the flesh and blood which were given for the life of the world. There must be a Gilgal before there can be a Passover in the deepest and fullest sense.

## **II. THE CORN OF THE LAND**

**“And they did eat of the corn of the land on the morrow after the Passover.”**

There is no need for the adjective old. It would be sufficient to say that they ate of the corn of the land; though it is quite likely that it was the corn of the previous harvest, and not that which was then goldening throughout the land of Canaan, and ready for the sickle.

The main point is, that, with great thankfulness, the Israelites, the majority of whom had never tasted anything but manna, ate of the produce of the Land of Promise.

According to the Jewish code, on that day the high-priest should have waved the first sheaf of the new harvest before God, so presenting the whole. The rite may have been omitted on that occasion, though religiously observed in after-years.

Is it not significant that on this very day the Lord Jesus arose from the dead, “**the first-fruits of them that slept**”? Surely, then, it is no straining of the parallel to say that the corn of the Land of Promise represents him in risen glory.

He fell as a seed of corn into the ground to die; but through death He has acquired the power of imparting Himself to all who believe. He was bruised, as all bread corn must be; the wheel of the cart of divine justice ground Him beneath its weight; but he has become thereby as the finest of the wheat to feed the needs of the world.

We must feed on the Paschal Lamb, and learn the full meaning of his Cross and passion, his precious death and burial; but we must also feed on the corn of the heavenly land, and derive life and blessing from his glorious resurrection and ascension.

The Church has in some measure learned to appreciate the importance of the incarnation and crucifixion. The picture-galleries of the world teem with masterpieces representing the holy nativity and the wondrous Cross. But it is comparatively seldom that we hear in treatise or sermon any adequate treatment of the ascension from the lowest parts of the earth to that zenith point of glory from which he fills all things.

The resurrection is emphasized as the sign of his Sonship, and the evidence of his accepted work; but its full significance as the first step in the upward passage of the Son of God, bearing us with himself from glory to glory until we sat down with him in the heavenly places, is too little appreciated.

Oh to know what Paul meant by his emphasis when he said, “**Yea rather that is risen again;**” and to fathom his thought when he said, that though he had known Christ after the flesh, he wished to know him so no more, because he longed to understand the power of his resurrection. The Paschal Lamb is good; but the corn of the land includes the fruits and honey and bread stuff that grow on the soil of the resurrection life.

The ascension of Christ may be considered in many aspects; but in each we seem to stand beneath his outstretched hands of benediction, as they did who saw him parted from them, and taken up before their adoring gaze.

The majesty and triumph of the God-man, as he is raised far above all principality and power, whether of angels or of demons, and above every name that is named, whether in this world or that which is to come; the certainty that the same power which raised him from the grave to the right hand of the Father waits to do as much for each of us; the belief that in his ascension he has received gifts for each of us, and the best of all gifts, the fullness of the Spirit, waiting for us to claim and receive; the conception that, however our emotions may change, we are one with him, accepted and beloved - these are themes that stir our sluggish hearts and make them leap with gladness, which no increase of corn or wine can yield to the men of this world.

Happy indeed are they who also in heart and mind thither ascend, and with him continually dwell. To do this is to eat of the corn and fruit of the land.

### III. THE MANNA

**“And the manna ceased on the morrow, after they had eaten of the old corn of the land.”**

There was no break between the two. The corn began before the manna ceased. The one overlapped the other as the thatch of a hay-rick or the feathers of a bird.

God does not wish that there should be those intervals of apparent desertion and the failure of supplies of which so many complain. It is quite likely that he may have to withdraw the extraordinary and exceptional, as represented by the manna; but he will wait until we have become accustomed to the ordinary and regular supplies of his grace, as represented by the corn.

In the blessings of our outward life he does sometimes humble us, and suffer us to hunger. The brook Cherith dries before he sends us to Zarephath. But as to the inward life, he gives without stint. The table is always prepared before us in the presence of our enemies - one form of soul-sustenance is within reach before another form fails.

We are constantly being forced from the familiar manna which came without anxiety or seeking on our part, to the corn which requires foresight and careful preparation.

This is needful; because in these we learn invaluable lessons of patience, and self-denial, and cooperation with God. But ah, how at first we shrink from the change! Who is there that does not cry, “The old is better”? The old furniture for the room; the old house where we spent so many happy days; the old familiar routine of life; the old ways of doing things. It is hard to part with them. But they have ceased to furnish the discipline we need; and we must leave them for the untried and unknown, where we obtain a new insight into the ways of God, and become workers together with him.

How gracious, then, is the gentle, thoughtful kindness of God, who lets us see the new before he quite takes away the old; accustoming us to walk before he removes the chair on which we had leaned so long.

Do not fret if the rhapsodies and outbursts and exuberant manifestations of earlier days have ceased; it is better to live by the ordinary laws of human life than by the abnormal and miraculous. And after all, there is as much divine power in the production of a fig and pomegranate, of olive-oil and honey, of barley and wheat, as in the descending manna; as much in the transformation of the moisture of the earth and air into the ruddy grape as in the miracle of Cana; as much in the maintenance of the soul in holiness and righteousness all its days as in the communication of unspeakable visions and words that may not be uttered.

But in addition to all these lessons, we may learn from the cessation of the manna that, as we advance in Christian experience, we think less of the coming down from Heaven in the incarnation, and more of the going back in the ascension.

The babe Jesus is less to us than the ascended Christ.

We look not so much toward the cradle of the manger-bed as upward to the throne and forward to the second advent. It makes a great difference to us whether we occupy the standpoint of the birth or of the ascension; and many a system of theology, when weighed in the balance, is found wanting because it fails to understand that the manna ceases when the Jordan is crossed and Canaan entered.

This, then, is our main lesson. We must learn to live in such wise as to be nourished with the life of the Son of God. When we eat of Christ, we live by him, as he lived by the Father; and as the Father, dwelling in Him, wrought through His life, and did His wondrous works, so He, entering into us the Word by His words will do through us what had otherwise been perfectly impossible.

Do you long for more strength to do or suffer, to witness or turn the foe from the gate? Then feed on Christ, meditating on his Word, communing with himself, filled by his Spirit, who takes of the things that are his and reveals them to us.

- **“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.”**
- **“He hath filled the hungry with good things.”**
- **“Bread which strengtheneth man’s heart.”**

~ end of chapter 6 ~

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