

Eyes Up



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Exodus 23:20-33

Now, if you are like me then you're a little bit sad today because the Olympics are ending today. If you're like me then you love the Olympics. I have probably watched more TV than I have in a long time just because the Olympics are on. I love the Olympics! And, one of the things I love about the Olympics is watching the stories behind the athletes. That is one of my favorite things! Just yesterday, I was watching the story of Gwen who won the women's triathlon. Gwen Jorgensen's story started off six years ago where she was in a cubicle working an accounting job. Somebody from the Olympics actually came to her and said, "hey, we want you to be on our triathlon team." She had never ran a triathlon and had never even rode a road bike before. She was like...*umm, I'm not sure I can do this*. Long story short she decided to join up. She goes to Beijing and doesn't do very well because she got a flat tire, but decided after that she is going to set her sight towards gold. She then takes the next four years and dedicates herself to triathlons. She starts winning these things left and right. So she was obviously the favorite. I was hearing her story and of all of the athletes, and every one of their stories are usually all the same. It starts with where they were. It talks about where she was- she was in a cubicle six years ago, she wasn't a triathlete, and she wasn't doing anything like that. Then, the story goes to where they are now. She is in Rio. The interviewer is asking, "How's Rio? How are you enjoying things? How are you training? How is your practice?" So, it talked about where

she's been, an accountant, and how she is in Rio as an athlete. But, the stories never stop there because the person interviewing them always points to where do you want to be and what are you hoping to accomplish. Of course it is always on top of the podium. So, the person being interviewed talks about where they've been and where they are, but that's never the full story. The full story is where they want to be and they want to be on top of the podium. They want to get the gold. So, when talking about Gwen, she had one goal and it was to get on top of the podium to get the gold medal.

And as I was thinking about the runners, they all kind of have the same pattern and the same three things because when you watch a race you see the runner take off but you never see them turn around and look straight back behind them. Right? You never see them look where they came from. When Gwen was racing she was not thinking...*man, I wonder how the accounting firm is doing* and then starts walking backwards. No, she's left that. She left the blocks and she is running. But then I noticed the runners glance around them but they never stare at where they are. Usain Bolt, a very famous runner, he will look around, right? He will smile, but that is not his focus. His focus is not where he's at. Where are all of the athlete's eyes almost all of the time? Their eyes are up. They are looking forward. Right? They are focusing on where they want to be. They want to be on that finish line. They want to be first. Athletes don't look backwards. They don't look a whole lot around them. They are focused up. Their eyes are up and they are looking forward because looking forward gives them the momentum to carry them where they hope to be which is on top of the podium.

As I was thinking about and reading Exodus chapter 23 and as I was studying it this week, it is kind of strange what God does in verse 20. So, we are going to start in verse 20 and I just want to explain that it's kind of strange what happens. I was a little bit troubled with this because God has just led the people out of Egypt. If you are a college student or maybe you are new with us and weren't here this year we've had God's great rescue in Exodus. God rescued the people of Israel from Egypt. So he's rescued

them, that is the first 19 chapters, and then we get to chapters 19, 20, 21, 22, and 23. God is taking them up on a mountain and he's giving them his law. It starts with the Ten Commandments and then he gives them the law.

So, he's just got done with the law in verse 19 and then it seems to me it would make perfect sense to then ratify the covenant. So, he's given them the law, here's the covenant, now let's ratify in blood (which is going to be next week in chapter 24), but he doesn't. He just inserts this whole dialogue about the land to which they are going- Canaan. I kept thinking why did God do this? I mean, it ends with laws about the Sabbath and then he goes into sending an angel for the land. Then after that is this ratification of the law that he just gave them. So, why does God insert the section that we are going to study this morning about the land? What is he trying to do? Here is what I have concluded and here is why I think God puts it in it, for the same reason for the runners and for the same reason for the athletes because what God wants is for their eyes to not be on where they've been-Egypt. He doesn't want their eyes to be on where they are- camping in the wilderness. He doesn't want them to just focus on the law or just focus on the right here and now, but he wants their eyes to be up. He wants them to remember their purpose. He wants them to remember where they are going. God has a mission for them. God has prepared a plan for them long before he rescued them and the plan is not the wilderness. The plan is Canaan. So, what God wants for these people is to not look at where they are or where they've been, but he wants them to constantly be thinking about and longing for and looking to where God wants them to be. That is why he gives them this reminder of the promise of the land. He wants them to have their eyes up and to look forward.

I think what we are going to see this morning is that God wants the same thing for us when it comes to our rescue that we have in Christ. What God wants us to do is not to look back, not to look just currently at how good or bad we might be doing, but he wants us to have our eyes up at what God is doing through us and the good plans that he has for us to accomplish. He wants our eyes to be looking forward at the goal that ultimately he has for each one of us. So, with that said, let's read the text,

this sort of bridge between the law, the land, and the ratification of the covenant. Again, I think the law is for them to remember where they're going, not just where they are at.

Scripture:

Exodus 23:20-23 "Behold, I send an angel before you to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared. 21 Pay careful attention to him and obey his voice; do not rebel against him, for he will not pardon your transgression, for my name is in him. 22 "But if you carefully obey his voice and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries. 23 "When my angel goes before you and brings you to the Amorites and the Hittites and the Perizzites and the Canaanites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, and I blot them out, 24 you shall not bow down to their gods nor serve them, nor do as they do, but you shall utterly overthrow them and break their pillars in pieces. 25 You shall serve the Lord your God, and he will bless your bread and your water, and I will take sickness away from among you. 26 None shall miscarry or be barren in your land; I will fulfill the number of your days. 27 I will send my terror before you and will throw into confusion all the people against whom you shall come, and I will make all your enemies turn their backs to you. 28 And I will send hornets before you, which shall drive out the Hivites, the Canaanites, and the Hittites from before you. 29 I will not drive them out from before you in one year, lest the land become desolate and the wild beasts multiply against you. 30 Little by little I will drive them out from before you, until you have increased and possess the land. 31 And I will set your border from the Red Sea to the Sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness to the Euphrates, for I will give the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you shall drive them out before you. 32 You shall make no covenant with them and their gods. 33 They shall not dwell in your land, lest they make you sin against me; for if you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you."

So again, in this narrative that we are walking through in Exodus, God redeemed his people through blood. He brought them out of Egypt through the exodus, through the Passover. We've seen that. So God's great salvation, his great rescue, has taken place and now he's given them the law in the wilderness, but here this insert about the land is reminding them that their goal is not just rescue from Egypt. Their goal is not just a cool campout in the wilderness. No, their goal is God has a future for them. God has a place for them. God has somewhere he is taking them and their eyes should be up. They should be looking at where God wants them to be, not just where they currently are. So I think God's rescue, and we are going to see God's presence, and God's word, are all meant to pull them forward to where God wants them to be not just keep them currently where they are. God is going to give them his presence, his word, and he's going to send an angel to get them where he wants them to be not just to stay where they currently are. So I think we are going to see three things in verses 20-21. The first thing we are going to see is that God had prepared a place for them. He says he is going to send an angel; he's going to go before you to guide you, protect you, and to take you to the place I have prepared for you.

When I read that word "prepare" it just jumped out at me and I got to thinking about how good God is. Think about it. Here is a God who doesn't just say I guess today maybe we will take this curve. I haven't really thought about you much or planned for you much, but I'm just going to wing it. No, here is a God, Heavenly Father, who loves his children and he has prepared a plan for them. He has went before them. He has thought about this plan before they were born. He thought about it when they were still in slavery. He thought about it even while they were on the mountain and he has already prepared where he wants them to be. That takes love from a father.

You know, I got to do that this summer. It's been one of the best summers I've had with my three boys. With my three boys, I got to prepare plans for them. So with Crider, my oldest, my seven year old, I got to fly out to Arizona to meet up with our mission teams there and I got to take him with

me. About a month before our trip, I began planning our R&R Day. We had one day at the end of the trip that Crider and I were going to spend together. So I began to plan it. We were going to drive up and stay in Flagstaff in a little teepee because I know he loves to camp and it was going to be really cool to stay in a teepee. I found this and booked it weeks ahead of time. I was checking around for things to do in Flagstaff. I was checking out how to get to the Grand Canyon, what time to get there, what bus to take, and what sites you would want to see. I spent a month planning this trip to the Grand Canyon that me and him were going to have and the whole time I was planning this, the entire month, Crider has no idea we were even going to Arizona. He had no clue! I only exposed it to him the night before we left. So, here I am, the whole month preparing and thinking about the joy I was going to have with him because I love him and I was preparing and spending time because I wanted it to be a great trip for him and he didn't even have a clue! So with Finley, my five year old, I had a meeting in Knoxville with Partners in Christ. Knoxville is really close to the Smokey Mountains so I thought I would take Finley with me and we would go camping in the Smokey Mountains for a couple days at the end of that trip. I began planning for that- where we were going to stay, what hikes we were going to do, where we would eat, and how we would pack the cooler. All of the plans went into it before I even told him about it. I was preparing. I was planning. I was getting the joy of "I love you and I want you to have a great time." And he was just clueless to the whole fact until just a few days before we went.

Then you have Garnett, my three year old. I had to obviously plan something for him. So for him it was when bubbas go to school we are going to do a camping trip. If you haven't noticed, it has rained literally for the last two weeks every single day. So every day my little three year old wakes up and says, "Dad, are we going to the camp today?" I say, "No, it's going to rain tonight. Sorry, but we are going maybe tomorrow." Then it rains. "Ok, maybe tomorrow." So it has been two weeks of me trying to figure out, make plans, pack the tent, pack the cooler, and get everything ready. I think tonight hopefully if it doesn't rain is going to be our camping trip that I've prepared for him that we are both going to get to enjoy. But it

has been joy for me getting to prepare these plans. Then when I reveal the plans to my sons, guess what? They got to partake in the joy as well.

So here we have a loving father who took joy in making a promise to Israel before they were even a nation. He goes back to Abraham saying I'm going to give you a land. So he had a promise for these people before they were even a people and now that they are a people they are standing on a mountain and God is saying remember that I loved you even before you were born...*Even before you knew me, I had plans for you and what I want to do is show you that. I want you to walk in them. So even though you are in the wilderness and you're going to be hungry and thirsty and you're going to want to complain, look up. Eyes up because I want you to see where I'm taking you and the good plans I have for you. Don't just think about where you are. Focus on where I'm longing to take you.* See, the mission was not to just rescue them from Egypt or rescue them from slavery. The mission is to bring them into God's place under God's presence and under God's blessing so that they could truly be his people and fulfill their calling to the nations.

You know, as I read that little phrase "I have a prepared place for you," a verse just automatically popped into my mind. It is Ephesians 2:8-10. Here is what it says, "8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." See, God had a plan for Israel before they were even Israel. And, here's the deal, God had a plan for you before you even knew him. Before he even redeemed you he had his eye on you and he already made individual plans for you. These are plans BEFOREHAND...*BEFORE I rescued you. BEFORE I brought you to myself I had plans for you. I have works for you to do. I have things for you to accomplish and a mission for you to walk in.* Then when I read that, I got this impression of me as a good father making individual plans for my boys. Our Heavenly Father made individual plans for every one of us that he has redeemed. It isn't general

I'm going to generally hope that all of you guys live on mission for me; no, he says he has specific preplanned works for you to walk in.

If you are redeemed, think about this. God individually has purposes and plans for you. He has individual people for you to bump into and to show the glory of Christ to. He has things only you can do that he has created you and equipped you for so that you would find those and walk in them. See, God has prepared things for you. So, here's the truth, if you're a Christian, if you've been redeemed, the whole goal is not just your redemption. The whole goal is not just to free you from sin. The whole goal is not just so you don't go to hell. Those things are a part of the deal but that's not the whole goal. God redeemed you and rescued you to bring you to himself. THAT is the goal. He is getting you to him and in getting you to him he wants you to see the great works he has for you so that you would walk in them and live a life that glorifies him to spread his glory. That is the bigger purpose of our rescue. See, he is reminding Israel right there on the mountain that he has redeemed them, but that he had a bigger purpose for them and that is getting them to the place that he longs for them to be- the prepared place. And I think he wants to remind us this morning that if you are a Christian he has prepared things for you and what he wants is not for you to have your eyes on who you used to be and all the mistakes you made in the past. He doesn't want you to have your eyes just on where you are right now, all of the sin that you're struggling with, how insufficient you think you are currently, and always looking down, but he wants you to look up. Look to the future! Do you know what God is doing? He is making you more like Jesus Christ every day. So look to Christ because it is him who you are going to be like and in looking to Christ, walking in those good works that he has planned for you. It isn't how did I fail today, but how am I going to walk in God's grace from this moment forward? How am I going to be led by the Spirit to accomplish God's work for me today?

So, the first thing we see is that God had prepared a place for them. That is point number one. The second thing that we see is that God sent his presence to guide and protect them. God is going to send his very

presence to guide and protect them. Now, if you have somewhere that you're supposed to be it's really important that you have good directions or a good guide to get you there. Have you ever followed someone who thought they knew where they were going and then they didn't know and they got you lost or something happened? It's important to have a good guide to lead you to where you're supposed to go!

I remember back in 2009 when me, my brother-in-law, and a couple of buddies were going to the Final Four. It was the days of Garmin. So, we had a Garmin on the dash and we programmed in a person that my father-in-law knew in Detroit because we were going to stay with them. We headed out one night and literally drove all night long. It was five o'clock in the morning, we are in Detroit, we are trying to find this guy's house, and we are just listening to Garmin. When Garmin tells us to turn that is where we turn. Where Garmin tells us to go that is where we go. I am actually driving and most everybody else is snoozing because it is five o'clock in the morning. So I am trying to find this place, I am dead tired, and Garmin tells me to make a right-hand turn. There is a lot of road construction going on, the roads are going everywhere, and I am confused. I assumed Garmin was confused too. He tells me to turn right so I turn right and we make this gigantic loop. All of a sudden, I see this big sign that says "Welcome to Canada." I was like I don't want to go to Canada I want to go to America. I want to go to the Final Four. I want to go to the friend's house. So I make the loop and then it has a place you can turn to go back to the United States. So I go back to the United States because that's where I want to go. As I make the loop, I see all of these booths and I see border patrol. I go, I stop, I'm getting a little nervous, and about the time I stop everybody wakes up..."Are we there yet?" *"Yeah, we are here, but we are in Canada."*"We are where??" *"Yeah, we are in Canada. So, yeah, maybe we can get some maple syrup for the ride home."* This lady comes to our door and since it's five o'clock in the morning I don't think she's had anybody the whole night and she's probably not happy that she had to be there all night. She's probably thinking taxpayers are paying my bill so I'm going to make sure and do things exactly to the book. So, here she begins to tell us, "Hey, do you want to go back to the United States? Do you have

your passports?" I said, "No, we don't have passports. We actually made a wrong turn. We were never wanting to go to Canada. We made a wrong turn and we are here." She says, "Well, I'm sorry, but you have to have a passport to get back to the United States."

Now, I'm beginning to sweat a little bit. Here's a lady that I think could take me and probably all of us. She was a tough girl! She is stern like give me your passport and I'm trying to explain to her that we were trying to go to the Final Four, the Garmin took us the wrong way, we ended up in Canada, and we are just trying to get back to the United States. I thought Canadians were nice. Apparently, they're not. So, here we are talking to this girl and she is like you need a passport. So as I am trying to explain to her I ask, "What happens if we don't have our passports?" She says, "Well, you will probably have to spend 8-10 days in a jail until we can clear you to go onto the United States." All of a sudden I hear "jail," we are in Canada and I'm beginning to realize I'm about to spend jail time in Canada. Things were not going well! Everybody is waking up and beginning to panic. Then I think she had a moment of a good heart or something because instead of making us go to jail she decided that she would spend the next hour interrogating us, taking all of the stuff out of our car, going through all of our bags, and strip-searching all of us. There was nobody else there. It was just us and her! And she is just having a good ole time. Then eventually, at the last of it, an hour passes by and she says, "Ok, you're free to go now." I think we sang the National Anthem going back into the United States because it was a beautiful moment! But for a little bit, I thought I was going to have to call my honey from jail in Canada and it's not going to be good. So it's important that when you're going somewhere to have a good guide to get you there. It's important to follow the right person. Garmin was a bad guide and got me to the wrong place.

And here is what God does for the people of Israel; he doesn't give them a map. He doesn't say here's the wilderness, here are some dots, I hope you make it to where I want you to be. He doesn't give them a GPS. He doesn't say, hey, put these coordinates in your iPhone and you'll get there. No, what does he do? He sends his very presence to his people. They are to

follow HIM into where he wants them to be. It's this beautiful picture where God says I'm going to send an angel to guide you and protect you. In the text, it says that his name will be in him. So he is going to have God's very name in him. He is going to have the authority to forgive or not forgive sins, he's going to blot out the people, and what I think is going on here is a theophany. This angel is a visible manifestation of the Lord. I think it is the Lord Jesus before his incarnation. He is going to come and lead the people through the wilderness so they are to follow after Jesus in the wilderness if they are going to get to where they are going. Now, it might just have been an angel, but if it is just an angel it is an angel who possesses the very name of God with all of the authority of God so the message is still the same- you need to follow the Lord. So here we see that what happens is they're given someone to lead them. God gives them his very presence to lead them in the wilderness. He doesn't give them a map and he doesn't say I hope you get there. He gives them his presence and I think the same is true for us.

Think about what our life is as believers. What does God do when we believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ? He seals us with his very Holy Spirit. He puts his presence within us. So, how will you know how to get where God wants you to be? He has given you his presence. His presence will guide you. His presence will protect you. Think about how good our father is and how much he loves us. He gives us his very presence.

The third thing we see is they were called to follow him. So God gives them his presence to get them where he wants them to be. What is their response? What should they do? God tells them they need to follow this angel. They need to follow his presence. Notice it says pay attention to him, follow him, and do not rebel against him. And if you do rebel, he isn't going to forgive your sins. So it's this idea of don't just follow the law, don't just follow my word, but also follow my presence. I'm actually going to lead you so follow him. Look to him. He is going to get you into where you are going. Of course, that is the only proper response, right? When you are met with the God of the universe, the only proper response is to follow. When Abraham was met with God, what did he do? He followed him. When

Noah was given a mission, what did he do? He obeyed. Think about the New Testament when Jesus called the people to himself. What did they do? They left their nets and they went and followed after Jesus. See, the same is true with us. If you've been called by the Lord, if you've been called into salvation, salvation is a following act. When you are redeemed by the Lord, you are now a disciple. You are now a follower of Jesus so what should you do in your Christian life? You are to follow him. That is part of the deal. We follow after the Lord.

Think about the people of Israel. What did they do? They got in the wilderness and they stopped following the Lord. They started looking around. They started complaining, belly aching, and griping. They were looking at where they were not where God wanted them to be. Eventually they weren't eyes up. They were eyes down, they complained, and what should have taken them a few months took them forty years and everybody died except for Joshua and Caleb because they were the only ones actually willing to follow the Lord. God doesn't want that for us! See, Israel was trying to find their own place instead of following God into the place that he had prepared for them. And when it comes to your life, you have two choices. You can either try to find your own place or you can follow the Lord into the place that he has for you. Those are the choices...especially for you college students! You're going to college right now and it's a formidable part of your life. You're making all sorts of life decisions and you have two choices. You're either going to find your own place, build your own life, and do your own future because you have your own plans, hopes, and dreams or you can say you're going to follow the Lord and he is going to take you to the place that he wants you to be. It's a choice that all of us have in every moment. Every day when we wake up are we going to do our own thing, build our own lives, and find our own places, which is what Israel did and it didn't work out very well, or are we going to follow the Lord? And in following the Lord and following his presence and following after Jesus we are going to be led to the place that God wants us to be. You know, sometimes when you do that your wills will collide. Your will and God's will sometimes collide.

Think about the Lord Jesus. In the last moments of his life when he is praying in the garden of Gethsemane what does he say? He says, Lord, if there is any way, take this cup from me, but then what does he pray at the very end? Not my will, but your will. At that point, there was this wrestling of Jesus not really wanting to suffer on a cross because it was going to be agonizing and painful, but he said you know what? God, I know your will is better than my will so I am going to trust you and I'm going to give my life to you.

See, there are moments of tension all of the time where your plans collide with the plans that God has for you. Your will collides with God's will so it is what decision we make in that moment. Will you follow your will, or will you follow God's will? And for you to get to a place where you say not my will, but your will, you will have to trust and believe that God's will is better than yours. You have to believe that at the end of the day if you completely fulfill all of your hopes and dreams it will leave you wanting, but if you trade your dreams and your hopes for the hopes that the Lord has for you it will change everything. THAT plan, THAT place will be so much better than what you could have ever imagined for yourself. God is reminding them that he has saved them for a mission, so now accomplish the mission. Get your eyes up on the mission—you're supposed to go to Canaan. God has redeemed us for a mission as well, and what are we to do? We are supposed to obey. We are supposed to follow him to find his place, not merely our own.

Now go down to verses 22 through 32. What we are going to see in verses 22 through 32 is this conquest and blessings when it comes to the land and I want us to talk about this just for a moment. The first thing God is going to remind them of is this idea of conquest in the land and that they are going to drive out the nations. The angel is going to go before them and drive out the nations. If you want a lot of dialogue on this, we actually preached a sermon on the whole book of Joshua in our Route 66 series and I encourage you to go back and listen to that. It will give you a lot of emphasis on how they drove out the land and the bigger purpose there. But, what I want you to see is there was a bigger purpose to them merely

driving out the land. They weren't supposed to just drive out the people so they could be a nation. No, the whole point was to drive out the nations to ultimately save the nations. See, here was God's plan to a man named Abraham. He said I'm going to bless you, I'm going to give you a land, and I'm going to make you into a great nation so that you'll be a blessing to all of the nations. So, how does that work? Well, God brings Israel to Canaan, he drives out the people, it is then to be a holy nation to himself with sacrifices, a temple, and his word. He builds a nation, the nation of Israel, and one of their great purposes was to bring about the Messiah. So God drives out the people from the land to bring about a nation who will bring about the Messiah. King Jesus comes from Israel. That was the whole goal of Israel- to bring about King Jesus, the Messiah.

So, they are to drive out the nations to bring about Jesus the Messiah for what greater purpose? To ultimately save all of the nations. See, here is Israel's mission: go drive out the people and become a nation so you can bring forth the Messiah. Think about our mission. It's a fulfillment of their mission. It piggybacks on their mission because they brought forth the Messiah. Now, what is our mission? The Messiah has come, he died and rose again, and what does he tell us, his disciples? It's not go wipe out the nations. It's not go blot out the nations. It's not go spread out the nations. It's go and gather in all of the nations. Go make disciples of all nations. The Messiah has come. Now go tell all of the nations that there is hope even for the gentiles in his name. See, their mission is to wipe out the nations. Our mission is to go and gather in all the nations through the gospel, which was ultimately God's heart behind the whole thing. Because God not only loves Israel, but he loves the nations. So he used Israel to bring the Messiah so ultimately the Messiah could redeem all nations and so all people could be blessed in Christ.

Then what he tells them in this text is that when they get to the land there will be blessings in the land. Now, let's think about this. Why is God saying when they get to the land they will have blessings? I mean, he tells them they won't get sick, their bread is going to thrive, their water is going to thrive, they will not miscarriage, no one is going to be barren, and they will

all produce young ones. He tells them they are going to live long in the land. Everything is going to be great again. So, why does he tell them there are going to be blessings in the land? What is he doing? I think what God is doing is giving a little picture of what it was like in Eden before Adam and Eve rebelled against God. Do you remember Eden before Adam and Eve walked away from God? Do you remember that they were in God's place and under God's rule? And under God's rule because they were obedient, they received his blessings. They walked with him. They had all the fruit. They had no sickness, no death, and everything was perfect. They had a relationship with God. That is what it's like to live in God's place, under God's blessing, and be obedient to God's word. That is how life is meant to be lived. What did Adam and Eve do? They didn't obey. They rebelled and in their rebellion the blessing got taken from them and in its place they received a curse. And all of us have been under that curse ever since. It is the curse of the fall. We don't obey God's word therefore we receive the curse rather than the blessings. But here in Israel there is going to be a moment where God says he's going to get his people back to his place and if they will be under his good word there will be the same blessings that were in Eden. It will be this little picture of what life is meant to be under God if they follow his authority as his people. There will be blessings!

It's this picture of Eden. It's this picture to show all of the nations so that the nations would look at Israel and ask why is life going so well for them? They are living under God, following his authority, and everything is going well for them. That is what life was supposed to be like in the garden when it was lost. It's this little picture pointing back to Eden. The problem is what did Israel do? They got into the land and they never obeyed. They did the same thing Adam did. Adam, in a perfect garden, disobeyed and got a curse rather than a blessing. Here is Israel. They get into the land, they are promised great blessings, but they can't do the one thing that drives those blessings and that is to live under the presence and authority of God so the blessings can come. They rebelled just like Adam did. Israel- the new Adam, the new son of God- disobeyed and received cursing and exile rather than blessings.

So, I think this land of Canaan was supposed to point back to how the garden was and how life is supposed to be under God's good rule, reign, and his presence. But, I think what it is mainly doing is pointing forward to another son of God, not Adam, not Israel, but to Jesus Christ. Because what did Jesus Christ do that was different than Adam and different than Israel? He lived obediently under the presence and authority of his heavenly father. He obeyed. He never disobeyed. So Jesus, in his obedience, receives the blessing that a life of obedience is supposed to bring. Jesus gets the full blessing of God because he was obedient. Where Adam failed, Israel failed, and you failed, Jesus didn't. Jesus obeyed. And here is what is so good about the gospel. The gospel is that if we believe in Christ, if we repent of our own selves and trust in the Lord Jesus, our disobedience and our curse he takes. He took it on his cross. He dealt with it, and do you know what he gives to us? His righteousness, his obedience, and also the very blessing that he has received from his heavenly father. He gives it out to his people. That is the glory of the gospel! What Adam couldn't do, obey and be blessed, what Israel couldn't do, obey and be blessed, Jesus did. He obeyed and he is blessed and he gives his blessings out to all of his people.

Think about right now. Ephesians 1 will tell us that we have been blessed with all of the spiritual blessings of the heavenly places. It teaches that right now, if you are in Christ, you have all of the spiritual blessings that God is ever going to give you. He has completely blessed you in his son, Jesus Christ. Nothing can separate you from the love of God. He has blessed you more than you could ever imagine. So, if you are in Christ, you have received those spiritual blessings. But then, think about Revelation 21. Not only in Christ do we right now receive all of the spiritual blessings, but there is a future, there is a new kingdom that is coming that ultimately Canaan points to a new kingdom where there will also be physical blessings. What does Revelation 21 tell us? It tells us there will be no more sickness, no more tears, and no more death. There will be none of that! All of the curse will be completely gone and we will live perfectly under the goodness of God, the presence of God, and the word of God. Why?

Because of the obedience of Jesus. Not because we obeyed and got the blessing, but because Jesus obeyed for us. He fulfilled all righteousness and he gives us his righteousness so that in the kingdom to come we will live under God in the righteousness of Christ and we will receive spiritual blessings and physical blessings.

See, that is what Christ brings for us in the gospel. What Adam couldn't do, what Israel couldn't do, and what you couldn't do, which is obey God, Jesus did for us. The gospel is that he gives his obedience to you if you trust in him. If you repent and believe in the gospel you get his obedience, spiritual blessings right now, and in the future kingdom the spiritual blessings will be met with physical blessings and we will live with God like we were supposed to in the beginning. We will live like Adam and Eve were supposed to live with the perfect presence of God with no more sin and no more death. That ultimately is what Canaan is pointing to here- that Jesus is going to get back what was lost through Adam and what was lost through Israel. Jesus is going to win that for us and the new creation will be filled with his blessings because of the obedience of Christ.

Then we see in closing in verse 27 through 33 that very simply the only proper response to the Lord is holy obedience. That is really our only proper response- holy devotion- to be completely devoted to the Lord. Think about what all we've talked, what all he's done, and what all he is going to do for us in the future. What should be our response as human beings? It's to follow wholeheartedly towards the Lord. So in the end he reminds them when they go into the land to not do what they do. Don't live life as a Canaanite. Don't live life with their values and their culture because they are disconnected with God. Don't make covenants with their god. If you serve their god it will be a trap, it will be a snare to them. So, he reminds Israel when they get to where they are supposed to be they will constantly be tempted to want what the world has rather than what God has for them. It will be a constant temptation, so he tells them to remember, in light of all I've done for you and where I'm taking you, stay holy devoted to me. That is what he's telling the people of Israel.

Think about us as Christians. What is the only proper response to God's great salvation in our life? The only logical response is holy devotion to the Lord. See, we can be tempted too. We look around our culture and we say we can start sharing the values of our culture that are against Christ. It is about making compromises because it feels good, looks good, it makes us more popular, or it gets us less ridicule. We can make all kinds of compromises and begin to blend into the culture instead of redeeming the culture through Christ. We can make covenants with the gods of our culture. We can start serving things like comfort, prosperity, or whatever the gods of our culture offer us. We can start living our lives for them rather than wholly being dedicated to the Lord. It's this tension that the New Testament brings forth. You are in the world, but you're not of the world. So we need to be in the world. We need to be friends with people who are of the world. We need to be a witness. We need to be a light, but being in the world at the same time we don't want to be of the world because that is not our identity. We are not of the world. We are of a new kingdom. We are of a heavenly kingdom that has come and is coming. So our values and the things that we love, the things that we pursue after are the things that Christ wants because ultimately we are wholly devoted to him.

In your life, if you have been redeemed by Jesus, just think through this. In your life, can you honestly say that you are wholly devoted to Christ? Do you live your life for his honor and his glory? Now, we are going to mess up. We aren't going to do this perfectly, but in your heart do you want to serve the Lord? Do you want to chase after him? Or, do you want to do your own thing...*I'm going to do this and share all of the values around me. I'm going to become like the world, not redeem the world.* If you think about it, the only proper response is devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ. That is what he wants for us. If you're not there, the good news is there is always repentance...even for believers. Do you know what believers do when they realize they aren't following the Lord and they are messing up? They repent and follow after the Lord. It's that simple. You repent, you follow after the Lord, and you say God, I've realized I'm looking back, I'm looking down, and I'm not looking up at what you have for me. What I

want to do is look up. I want to follow you into the plans that you have for me.

You know, we've named this last part of our series, "God with Us." We put out the artwork for it this week and as you can see, the whole idea of "God with Us" is a tabernacle. The people are camping around and there is this tabernacle. That is how the book is going to end. In chapter 40 God is going to come down and dwell with his people in the tabernacle and that is really God's great mission. It's to eventually get back with his people. It's for his people to be in his place, under his presence, and under his good word so that he can dwell with his people. Eventually he can dwell with ALL the people of the nations. What we see in the New Testament in Corinthians where Paul writes in his letter is that all of the promises find their yes in Christ because ultimately what that tabernacle is pointing to in the land of Canaan as we eventually get there is Christ. Because what we see in the New Testament is that the very place of God is not a temple, it's not a building, and it's not a tabernacle. It was always pointing to a person, the person of Jesus Christ who tabernacled among us, who said tear this temple down, I will rise it in three days because he was speaking of his own body.

See, Jesus is the very place of God. Not only that, but Jesus is the very presence of God. For whom better is the presence of God than Jesus Christ? When you look at his face you are beholding God! And it can be said of Jesus, he is God with us. Also we find those blessings that are supposed to be in Canaan ultimately come through Christ. Christ obeyed and got the blessings. So, how are we blessed? Under God. It's in the Lord Jesus Christ. How do all of those blessings go to all of the nations? It's Christ- his death, burial, and resurrection. It is his gospel to all nations.

So we see that this whole book of Exodus is ultimately pointing to the Lord Jesus Christ where God's people are back in his place, under his presence, under his good rule, and receiving the blessings. All of that culminates in Jesus Christ. That is the gospel! If you're a believer in Christ then you are in God's place, under God's blessing, under his presence, and receiving his

blessings. That is the gospel! It is ALL CHRIST! It was all pointing to the Lord Jesus Christ. As we read Exodus don't miss what Exodus was pointing to. It's ultimately pointing to Jesus Christ.

So, why in this chapter does God remind us of the land? You have law and covenant. It seems like they would be seamlessly going together. Why does he take these verses and tell us about the land? Why does he tell the people where they're going in the midst of where they are? Why did he do that? Because I think he wants their eyes to be up. He doesn't want them looking back to Egypt. He doesn't want them to focus only on the wilderness which is what they do and they grumble and complain. He doesn't want them to do that. He wants their eyes to be up... *Think about where I'm taking you! Think about the plans that I've prepared for you because looking up will pull you to where you're supposed to be, not keep you where you are.* I think the same is true with you and the same is true with me. God wants to remind you this morning that he has a prepared work for you. God has a purpose for you and that is to make you more like Jesus Christ and to impact people for Jesus Christ. He didn't just redeem you to be redeemed. He redeemed you to bring you to himself so that you could walk in the works that he has prepared for you and so you can walk in those good things that Christ has bought for you.

I think what God wants to remind us as we get ready to leave is this: don't have your eyes looking back on who you used to be. Don't think about all of those things you used to do. That's in your past. Don't think about right now- the flaws you have and all the reasons why you can't do what God wants you to do. Don't think about those. God doesn't want you to look down. He wants you to look up because he has a plan for you. He has good works for you to walk into. What he wants you to do is look up and find THOSE. Look to the Lord Jesus. Find the things that the Lord Jesus wants you to do and do those for the glorious sake of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

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