

## CLAIMING GOD'S FUTURE

## Joshua 1:1-9

Int: Twice God led Israel right up to the border of the Promised Land, offered them a great future and ordered them to take it. Their first chance to claim God's future ended in failure; the second, in fulfillment. Israel's experience opens a window on why some churches fail to claim God's future for them and why others succeed.

### WHY MANY FAIL

The group that went in to spy out the land brought back a divided report. Ten said "We cannot do this." Two said, "Yes, we can." But the people sided with the ten and threw away the future God offered them. They show why many fail!

Have a problem with *focus*. In the future God set before them were both obstacles and opportunities. But Israel had a keener eye for the difficulties before them than for the Deity beside them. A church that focuses more on giants than on God will never claim God's future.

Have a problem with *fear*. Enemies in Canaan were many and strong, fierce and dangerous. Israel's hearts melted and their courage dried up. They would not go in! Fear will keep a church from claiming God's future.

Have a problem with *forgetfulness*. On every step of their historic journey from Egypt God had met their needs. Now he stood ready to move them into the Land. But they forgot how faithful God was in the past. A church that forgets how God saw them through in the past will never claim God's future.

Because they refused to go forward and take the Land, God left them to wander forty years in the wilderness until that rebellious generation died. But he was not done. Once more he led them to the border and ordered them to enter.

### WHY OTHERS SUCCEED

This sequel shows how a church can claim God's future.

Through *preparation*. Joshua gave orders to gather supplies for the invasion, sent spies to find the best way to attack, and drew up plans for the campaign. He prepared to claim the Land. To claim God's future a church must ask two questions. What does God want us to do? And how do we do it?

Through *commitment*. Israel could not claim God's future till they were willing to pay the price, to strap on armor, take their weapons and lay their lives on the line. To claim God's future a church must get out of the comfort zone and find the commitment zone. They must "come back like they mean business!"

Through *togetherness*. Before Israel crossed the Jordan to begin claiming God's future, representatives from the tribes of Reuben and Gad and from the Machir clan of Manasseh came to ask if they could settle east of the river. Joshua agreed, but only if they first helped take the Land. Claiming God's future demanded total unity. "United we stand, divided we fall" is more than a time-worn catch phrase. It is in fact a key to claiming God's future for a church.

Con: Over the doors of the National Archives Building in Washington is inscribed, "What is past is prologue." The best is yet to be! That can be true of this church. It has a great past. God has for it a greater future. You stand on the banks of your Jordan. The Land is before you. What will you do?