

What does it mean to be United? Joshua 1:10-18

National unity is a major topic of conversation in the United States of America. After all, the word “united” is part of our name. Our national motto is “out of many, one.” Most people in the United States long to be a part of a nation united, but yet they often don’t feel very unified.

The nation of Israel is very obviously not the United States. The Bible has nothing to say about the national unity of our nation, even though it has much to say about the unity of Israel. The closest parallels today to commands and promises that God makes to Israel have to do with the commands and promises that God makes to the Church (all of those in the world who have faith and are saved by Jesus)

The reason for the command to unity of Israel has to do with the covenant that God made with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and their descendants. God had promised to make them into a nation, and nationhood only exists with unity.

As you have this discussion, you may want to familiarize yourself with the map.

<https://www.thebiblejourney.org/biblejourney2/27-the-israelites-move-into-canaan/the-israelites-cross-the-river-jordan/>

At this week’s point in the story of the Israelites, they are now ready to cross the Jordan River to begin taking possession of the land that would comprise the nation. Before they break camp to go, Joshua reiterates a specific command that Moses had given earlier to the TransJordan tribes (Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh). They will continue on to the western side and help their fellow Israelites possess their land even though the eastern tribes already gained their inheritance. God’s insistence on unity has many things to say to us, the people of God today (the church) about how we should think about and pursue unity.

Joshua 1:10-18

¹⁰ And Joshua commanded the officers of the people, ¹¹ “Pass through the midst of the camp and command the people, ‘Prepare your provisions, for within three days you are to pass over this Jordan to go in to take possession of the land that the Lord your God is giving you to possess.’”

¹² And to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh Joshua said, ¹³ “Remember the word that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, saying, ‘The Lord your God is providing you a place of rest and will give you this land.’ ¹⁴ Your wives, your little ones, and your livestock shall remain in the land that Moses gave you beyond the Jordan, but all the men of valor among you shall pass over armed before your brothers and shall help them, ¹⁵ until the Lord gives rest to your brothers as he has to you, and they also take possession of the land that the Lord your God is giving them. Then you shall return to the land of your possession and shall possess it, the land that Moses the servant of the Lord gave you beyond the Jordan toward the sunrise.”

¹⁶ And they answered Joshua, "All that you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. ¹⁷ Just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you. Only may the Lord your God be with you, as he was with Moses! ¹⁸ Whoever rebels against your commandment and disobeys your words, whatever you command him, shall be put to death. Only be strong and courageous."

Discussion Questions

- Why do you think God through Joshua only gave the people three days' notice to prepare provisions and break camp? Would there have been some potentially negative consequences for waiting longer? (vv. 10-11)
- What would be the temptation for the eastern tribes to remain on their land and not help the other ten tribes across the Jordan?
- How was faith put into action for the men of the eastern tribes to leave their wives and children behind to go across the Jordan?
- What sort of excuses can you imagine the eastern men making for NOT going across the Jordan?
- Why was it very important for the eastern tribes to do what they had said they would do?
- Do you think the people of Israel were sincere in their response to Joshua? (vv. 16-18)
- Do good intentions always equate to obedience?
- What exactly are the sacrifices that need to be made for the sake of unity in Israel?
- Why is unity only achieved through mutual sacrifice?
- What sorts of sacrifices do you believe God is calling you to make to benefit the body of Christ?