

The Judge of all the Earth

By nature, we tend to be self-centred, which is not all bad.

For instance, it is a good thing to be vitally concerned with our personal standing before God, and our hope of eternal life.

However, this tendency toward self-centeredness is not always beneficial in a servant.

No, in the strictest sense of the word, a loyal servant will be more concerned with his master's agenda than his own.

However, if you have a really good master, and God's servants do, then your Master's agenda will be in your best interests also.

And in Mark 10:29-31 Jesus makes this very point. **"Assuredly, I say to you, there is**

no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, "who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time--houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions--and in the age to come, eternal life.

"But many *who are first* will be last, and the last first."

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Yes, as loyal servants, we would do well to concern ourselves with God's agenda.

And God does have an agenda.

In fact, He has more than one agenda.

And we can discover what one of those agendas is by simply listening in on a conversation between Abraham and God.

We pick it up in Genesis, shortly after Abraham's angelic visitors left his tent and were walking down the road.

Abraham was following them in the company of his most *important* visitor:

Genesis 18:20-21 **"And the LORD said,**

"Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave, "I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to Me; and if not, I will know."

Well, Abraham already knew, and he also knew such wickedness could only end in judgment.

And what was even worse, he knew his nephew was right in the middle of ground zero.

V 23 **"And Abraham came near and said, "Would You also destroy the righteous with the wicked?"**

And then, in V 25, he answered his own question.

"Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

Now, there's a great deal that could be said for Abraham's argument, but it's his identification of God as **"the Judge of all the earth"** that attracts our attention this morning.

And it does that, because that exalted title suggests a very important activity.

Yes, as **"the Judge of all the earth,"** one of God's major agendas is evaluating the nations He has created, and judging them according to their works.

Unfortunately, most of these nations are in open rebellion.

Psalm 2:1-3--- **"Why do the nations rage, And
the people plot a vain thing? The kings
of the earth set themselves, And the
rulers take counsel together, Against the
LORD and against His Anointed, saying,
"Let us break Their bonds in pieces And
cast away Their cords from us."**

As a result, history has been one long
record of judgment and disaster.

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It all began in antediluvian times when the
wickedness of man had become so great and
God's heart had become so grieved that He
said---"**I will destroy man whom I have
created from the face of the earth."**

That was the beginning, and the final
judgment of this present age will occur
when the nations are gathered together
bent on Israel's destruction.

And in between, the Old Testament records the destruction of one wicked nation after another.

Yes, mankind has defied "**the Judge of all the earth**" and has paid the price.

Thankfully, God has another agenda, which has been made possible through the death of His own dear Son.

We will be making reference to that agenda as we go along.

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But for now, we will be zeroing in on two lands that fell under God's judgment, and the part Israel played in their destruction.

The first one is Egypt.

Do we know what Egypt was like before God's judgment fell upon it?

Well, yes, we do.

It is briefly mentioned in Genesis chapter 13 as a metaphor to describe the well watered plain of Jordan.

Genesis 13:10 **"And Lot lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere (before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah) like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt as you go toward Zoar."**

Yes, the **"land of Egypt as you go toward Zoar"** was right up there with **"the garden of the LORD."**

And not only was it well favoured, but it had greatly benefited from Joseph's interpretation of Pharaoh's dream.

Because Egypt had been given prior knowledge of the upcoming famine, they were the only nation that was prepared to deal with it.

Yes, Egypt had greatly benefited from Joseph and from Joseph's God.

And yet, in process of time, there **"arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph."**

Wouldn't you think such a benefactor would be well written up in their history books?

But, no, Joseph had been forgotten, and his family, who had originally been welcomed into Egypt as honoured guests, were now reduced to the status of slaves.

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And the land of Canaan had also benefited from a benevolent Creator.

For hundreds of years the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites had lived in a land *flowing* with milk and honey.

You might say Canaan was a farmer's delight.

In fact, it was a land that required two full-grown men to carry **"one cluster of grapes."**

And what did all this abundance produce in the hearts of the inhabitants?

Well, it produced idol worship, and the rank debauchery that went along with it.

In fact, Romans Chapter 1, although it doesn't specifically refer to these nations, seems to do a very good job of describing them.

And it also does a very good job of describing God's reaction to such wickedness.

Romans 1:18-25 **"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God**

has shown *it* to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify *Him* as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man--and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served

the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen."

First of all, this passage refutes the notion that mankind worships idols because of ignorance.

Certainly, the Gentiles hadn't enjoyed the direct revelation from God that Israel had, but they were not without knowledge. No, they should have known better, but as V 23 records, they **"changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man."**

And the operative word here is **"changed."**

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When Eleanor and I were first married, we set up housekeeping in a large red brick house we purchased in Woodstock.

It would be nice to say every prospect pleased us, but that was not quite true.

You see, one of the upstairs bedrooms had been painted bright red, and another one dark blue.

And not only were the colours hideous, but they had been applied in waterproof enamel paint on top of three layers of wallpaper.

Gross!

Well, to remedy this situation, I took a couple of pieces of plywood the size of your hand, and drove nails through them, with the points just sticking out.

With these, we set to work scoring the paint so we could wet the wallpaper and remove it.

The bottom line was, we hated the colours, and we were determined to change them.

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And that's exactly why the godless nations of Canaan "**changed the glory of the**

incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man--and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things."

They hated what they saw, and they were determined to change it.

But someone will say, "It's not hard to see bright reds and dark blues, but God is invisible."

"How can you hate someone you can't see?"

Well, V 19 gives us the answer to that question.

It says---"**what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown *it* to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made."**

And certainly Canaan was overflowing with the things God had made.

In fact, they were literally surrounded by the good gifts of a benevolent Creator. But somehow, their conscience told them that He was also a Creator Who expected righteous living.

And because they didn't like what they saw, they suppressed **"the truth in unrighteousness."**

Or you might even say, they suppressed the truth for the sake of unrighteousness.

Yes, they **"changed the glory of the incorruptible God into"** the kind of gods who would condone and even encourage their wicked lifestyle.

And if you want some depressing reading, just look at verses 26 to 32 where their debauchery is described in detail.

Clearly, **the Judge of all the earth"** must remove this cancer from society.

And, in fact, He had already begun.

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One night, while the parties were in full swing and the population was enjoying the good life, God made a very decisive move.

For some time now there had been a nomad, Abram by name, living in Canaan.

Oh, he was well respected, and was even called a mighty prince among them.

But in the larger scheme of things, he was just a squatter, and wasn't worth thinking about.

But God was thinking about him.

In fact, He had been thinking about him even before he was born.

And now the time had come to make a very important covenant with this lowly wanderer.

While Abram slept, a smoking oven, picturing God Himself, and a burning torch, speaking of the Lord Jesus, passed

between the pieces of several sacrificed animals.

It was a time-honoured and well-known way of sealing a bargain.

And as Genesis 15:18 tells us---"**On the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying: "To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates."**

Yes, "**I have given this land**" to your descendents.

God had signed on the dotted line, and Canaan was Abram's possession.

When the inhabitants of the land had gone to bed, Abram was just a squatter.

But when they arose the next morning, perhaps with a hangover, they were squatters in Abram's land.

They had been disinherited.

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But to all appearances, nothing had changed. Life went on as usual, and Abram continued to wander in the land.

As Stephen would point out many years later, **"God gave him no inheritance in it, not even enough to set his foot on."**

In fact, when Sarah died, Abram had to buy a piece of ground in a land he legally owned just to bury her in.

No, nothing had changed, and **"Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil."**

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So, why did it take so long for God's judgment to fall?

Well, for one thing, God's preordained time had not yet come.

As He told Abraham in Genesis 15:16---"**the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.**"

However, while the Amorites were busy filling up their cup of iniquity, God was busy filling up Egypt with the descendants of Abraham.

A nation was being born, a nation that would execute God's judgments on a very wicked people.

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Yes, Israel would be God's instrument of judgment, but they would also be His channel of blessing.

As He told Abraham, in Genesis 12:3---"**I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.**"

In this one verse, we see God's agenda as
"the Judge of all the earth," and His
agenda as a loving God.

John 3:16---"**For God so loved the world that
He gave His only begotten Son, that
whoever believes in Him should not perish
but have everlasting life.**"

And what is particularly interesting about
both of these agendas is the fact that
God has created a special people to get
involved in each of them.

Israel's involvement in Canaan is now
history, but it is a history that has
been recorded for the benefit of that
other special people.

As 1 Corinthians 10:11 tells us "**---all
these things happened to them as
examples, and they were written for our
admonition, upon whom the ends of the
ages have come.**"

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Although it is a little off the subject, I would like to spend a few moments talking about Israel as a type rather than as a nation.

First of all, Israel in slavery is a picture of all those in slavery under the god of this present age, that cruel master, Satan, who is pictured by that other cruel master, Pharaoh.

And not only was Israel in bondage, but they were completely unable to deliver themselves out of that bondage.

If they had tried to rise up against their masters, they would have lost.

And it is equally true of the unsaved.

Their only hope is in God's mercy and God's deliverance through our Lord Jesus Christ.

As Ephesians 2:8-9 makes very clear **"---by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."**

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And the manner in which Israel was delivered is also quite instructive.

During the last plague, their firstborn was sheltered from God's judgment by a Passover Lamb.

That lamb speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ
Whose blood was shed to redeem us.

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And, of course, there was that narrow pathway to freedom.

Exodus 14:29-30 **"But the children of Israel had walked on dry *land* in the midst of the sea, and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their**

left. So the LORD saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore."

That narrow passage was responsible for two things.

It provided a pathway to freedom, but it also provided a grave for Pharaoh's army, destroying his ability to enslave them.

In like manner, not only does Christ's salvation deliver us from the penalty of sin, but it also delivers us from the *power* of sin.

As 1 Corinthians 10:13 tells us **"No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God *is* faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear *it*."**

Oh, we might backslide and willingly return to the leeks and garlic of Egypt, but we can never say "the devil made me do it". And so, with this brief look at Israel as a type, we will return to the actual nation.

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God had delivered Israel for a specific purpose, and that purpose wasn't a life of wandering in the wilderness.

No, the wilderness was to be a time of growth, and was to be very brief.

In like manner, the manna was only meant to sustain them during this short journey.

Afterward, it would be replaced by the old corn of the land.

It was much like the milk of the word that Peter describes as *fit nourishment* for babes in Christ.

And as 1 Peter 2:2 tells us---"**as newborn babes**" we should "**desire the pure milk of the word,**" that we may "**grow thereby.**"

And the wilderness experience was also meant to be a time of growth.

They had started their journey as redeemed slaves, but they were to enter the Promised Land as soldiers.

That was the intention, but that wasn't the result.

No, when they finally reached that wonderful land, they cried like babies.

Numbers 14:1-3 "**So all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night. And all the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, "If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness! "Why has**

the LORD brought us to this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should become victims? Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?" So they said to one another, "Let us select a leader and return to Egypt."

Certainly, God's mighty hand had gotten Israel out of Egypt, but it would take 40 years to get Egypt out of Israel.

And as long as they wandered in the wilderness, nothing made sense.

Just look at the feasts they were supposed to observe.

Exodus 23:14-16 **"Three times you shall keep a feast to Me in the year: "You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread (you shall eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded you, at the time appointed in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt; none shall appear before Me**

empty); "and the Feast of Harvest, the firstfruits of your labors which you have sown in the field; and the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you have gathered in *the fruit of your labors from the field.*"

But you can't make unleavened bread with manna.

That would require the grain of Canaan.

And how could you have a "**Feast of Harvest**" when there wasn't any harvest?

Nor could there be a "**Feast of Ingathering**" when there wasn't any ingathering.

All that was left were those discouraging words ringing in their ears---"**none shall appear before Me empty.**"

"Must I go, and empty-handed, thus my dear Redeemer meet?

Not one day of service give Him, lay no trophy at His feet?"

Oh, the wilderness was very safe, but it was very barren.

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And the real irony of this whole situation was--they were facing a *defeated* foe.

In modern warfare, it is usual to bombard the enemy before sending in the troops. It's called *softening up* the enemy, and it is designed, not only to inflict casualties, but to destroy morale.

Well, God had softened up the enemy well in advance, a fact they discovered 40 years later when Israel sent out their second set of spies.

The spies had almost been discovered, and had taken refuge in Rahab's house.

It was then that Rahab revealed the true situation.

Joshua 2:9-11 **"Now before they lay down, she came up to them on the roof, and said to**

the men: "I know that the LORD has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you. "For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were on the other side of the Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. "And as soon as we heard *these things*, our hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of you, for the LORD your God, He *is* God in heaven above and on earth beneath."

And when exactly did the Lord dry up the waters of the Red Sea?

It was *40 years ago* when they left Egypt!

Yes, for 40 years the enemy had been living in total defeat just inside the land of Canaan, while Israel had been living in self-imposed defeat just outside that same land.

"So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief." Hebrews 3:19

There's a lesson here, isn't there?

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So, what was wrong with that land of milk and honey?

What was wrong with a land they already possessed?

Well, to be perfectly honest, the spies were right when they said---"**We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we.**"

Of course, Joshua and Caleb were also right, when they said "**He will bring us into**

this land and give it to us," but nobody was listening to them.

No, they were no match for the enemy, and that is the end of it.

And for that generation, it was.

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And when the second generation arrived, the situation hadn't changed.

In fact, it would *never* change.

Deuteronomy 9:1-2 **"Hear, O Israel: You are to cross over the Jordan today, and go in to dispossess nations greater and mightier than yourself, cities great and fortified up to heaven, "a people great and tall, the descendants of the Anakim, whom you know, and of whom you heard it said, 'Who can stand before the descendants of Anak?"**

So, what was God doing, sending them on a suicide mission?

Certainly not!

Actually, He wasn't sending them at all.

He was going before them.

V3 **"Therefore understand today that the LORD your God is He who goes over before you as a consuming fire. He will destroy them and bring them down before you; so you shall drive them out and destroy them quickly, as the LORD has said to you."**

Yes, the whole campaign must be based on trust.

They were to take the first step, and God would do the rest.

In fact, they couldn't even *enter* the land until they got that principle straight.

Joshua 3:14-17 **"So it was, when the people set out from their camp to cross over the Jordan, with the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people, and as those who bore the ark came to the**

Jordan, and the feet of the priests who bore the ark dipped in the edge of the water (for the Jordan overflows all its banks during the whole time of harvest), that the waters which came down from upstream stood *still*, and rose in a heap very far away at Adam, the city that *is* beside Zaretan. So the waters that went down into the Sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, failed, and were cut off; and the people crossed over opposite Jericho. Then the priests who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan; and all Israel crossed over on dry ground, until all the people had crossed completely over the Jordan."

Now, the crossing of the Jordan was very different from the crossing of the Red Sea.

When they left Egypt, that narrow way had been open for some time before they had to pass through it, but in the case of the Jordan, there was no pathway at all.

As Joshua 3:15 tells us, it was only when

"those who bore the ark came to the Jordan, and the feet of the priests who bore the ark dipped in the edge of the water" that anything happened.

Can you imagine being the first priest in line?

All the priests behind you were still on dry ground, but you were stepping into a raging torrent.

But as soon as **"the feet of the priests who bore the ark dipped in the edge of the water (for the Jordan overflows all its banks during the whole time of harvest), that the waters which came down from upstream stood *still*, and rose in a heap**

very far away at Adam, the city that is beside Zaretan."

And that was the principle that must prevail throughout the whole campaign.

Just jump in and get your feet wet, and God will provide the miracle.

And if Christians are going to prevail against principalities and powers, that's the principle they must apply.

Certainly, there would have been other seasons in the year when such a crossing wouldn't have required any faith at all.

In the middle of a dry summer, they could have looked for a shallow place to ford the river without difficulty.

But this was the time of harvest.

Likewise, if we're going to step out in a time of a spiritual harvest, we are going to face insurmountable difficulties far beyond our natural resources.

All we can do is *jump in* and trust the Lord
for the miracle!

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This miraculous crossing also paints another
picture.

It is a picture of the Ark of God (a type of
our Lord Jesus Christ) holding back that
tremendous weight of sin which had piled
up, way back to Adam.

However, because of time constraints, we'll
have to press on and save that beautiful
type for some other time.

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Getting back to our original lesson, we have
been impressed by the fact that that
first step of faith would be
characteristic of the *entire* campaign.

And since---"**all these things happened to
them as examples,**" what does the land of

Canaan really symbolize in the life of a Christian?

Well, first of all, it is a land that is jealously guarded by Satan and his hosts. And those principalities and powers and rulers of the darkness of this age will always be mightier than we are.

So then, it is a land in which we can only move forward as we rely upon Christ's victory.

But it is also a land where very ordinary people get to participate in very extraordinary victories.

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In many ways William Carey was a very ordinary man.

His father was a weaver, and he himself was a cobbler.

However, he was a natural scholar, and was gifted in linguistics, and eventually he became a schoolteacher.

After that, he served as a pastor of a small congregation.

It was during that time that God gave him a burden for foreign missions, a burden that was not shared by his contemporaries.

In fact, once, while he was speaking very fervently on the subject, a fellow minister, Dr. Ryland by name, shouted out, "Young man, sit down: when God pleases to convert the heathen, He will do it without your aid or mine."

Nevertheless, acting on his own convictions, William set out for India, taking his wife and young family with him.

They were to meet years of discouragement, debt, and disease, and eventually, after

the death of one of their children, his wife's mental health completely collapsed.

But he carried on, and others, encouraged by his testimony, joined him.

After 41 years in that pagan land, he and his colleagues had translated the scriptures into 40 languages and dialects of that country.

Also, a college, a medical school, and a leper hospital had been established, along with over 30 large mission stations.

As a young man back in England, he had preached a sermon which he entitled ---
"Expect great things from God, Attempt great things for God."

In a nutshell, I would call that the *language of Canaan*.