

PLANTS OF THE WORD

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Lessons: Deuteronomy 8:1-9; Joshua 1:7,8; Apocalypse Explained 386:1

For the Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates: a land of olive oil and honey; a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack anything in it” (Deuteronomy 8:7-9).

After the Children of Israel were led out of captivity in Egypt, they crossed the Red Sea, but they still had a long journey ahead of them to their Promised Land. Moses led the Children of Israel for forty years, right up to but not across the River Jordan. It was at this point that new leadership was to take over, and Joshua was selected by the Lord. The Ten Commandments were repeated to these chosen people and further instructions were given concerning the land they were about to enter.

The words of our text above were given to the Children of Israel as a promise of what was ahead. Such a promise must have appealed to them after their many years of wandering through the desert. They were about to enter a land with plenty of water, rich valleys and hills capable of producing an abundance of crops that would feed them and their children. The Lord promised them grain and grapes and fruit from trees—all that nature could provide them was waiting across the river.

Included was a warning, however, that all their needs would be met *if* they obeyed the Lord’s Commandments every day of their lives. These important instructions were again repeated to Joshua when he took over as the leader. The phrase used then was, *“Only be thou strong and very courageous that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn thou not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest”* (Joshua 1:7).

And it happened just that way. The grown children of those who had followed Moses for many years did enter the Promised Land and enjoyed all the Lord had promised them. They had to defeat the enemies who inhabited the land, but when they obeyed the Lord’s Commandments, the Lord was with them in victory.

Years before, however, twelve men were sent in to this Promised Land to see what was there. They returned carrying figs, pomegranates, and a bunch of

grapes that was so heavy it took two men to carry it. They also learned that there were soldiers in the land whom they described as giants. If they were to inhabit the Promised Land of Canaan, they would have to earn it by ridding it of the soldiers there. Many feared to do this and never entered the land. But Joshua, one of the twelve spies, trusted in the Lord and lived to enter into it.

Hopefully, you children will never have to undergo what the Children of Israel did to receive their happiness. But the Lord, through these stories of the Word, is describing what lies ahead of everyone while he lives on this earth. We may not have giants who wish to kill us, but we will face evil spirits who are anxious to keep us out of heaven, or our Promised Land. All through life, from childhood on, we are attacked by an army of evil spirits who want us to disobey the Lord's Commandments. They want us to be selfish, to be mean to our neighbor, to lie and cheat if necessary, and to think only of ourselves rather than helping our neighbors and obeying the Lord's teachings.

They are the giants we face throughout life. But, as He did for the Children of Israel, the Lord *does* give us a promise of what heaven will be like. Think back in your memory how many times you have enjoyed the happiness of heaven. Perhaps it was a time when you did something very special for friends of yours, and it made them happy. The result was you were *just* as happy having given something to them. Or perhaps those times when you worked very hard at a project -and when you had finally completed it, you had that nice warm feeling of a job well done. Or recall, if you will, those times when you were obeying the rules of your parents or your teachers, and you received praise. Think how good it felt to tell the truth, after being tempted to lie. Remember how fine it felt to be honest and admit when you made a mistake. Think about how wonderful it was to be around friends who loved you and respected you.

This is to taste a little bit of heaven! It is to feel the sphere of angels around you, and it is a promise of what it will be like to eternity when you enter heaven. It is the same as when the Lord promised the Children of Israel that they would eventually enter the Promised Land of milk and honey.

The Lord knows that it is not easy to be good all the time. He knows that the evil spirits will attack us when we're tired and hungry. He knows that there are times when people will try to harm us or lead us astray. But the Lord reminds us to be strong and of good courage. If in our times of trials and discouragement we can recall the words given to Joshua, the great leader—if we can keep the Lord's Commandments each day of our lives—then the hells will never harm us, any more than the giants could harm the Children of Israel as they entered their Promised Land. Each time we show our courage, the Lord makes it a little bit easier the next time. He satisfies our thirst for knowledges of how to be good, just as the Children of Israel were rewarded with figs and pomegranates and grapes.

We have much to be thankful for every day of our lives, but we can especially remember the many blessings we receive when our country celebrates Thanksgiving or some kind of harvest festival. The Lord provides us with rich foods that feed our natural bodies. But even more important, He feeds our minds with the foods that build our spiritual bodies—the kind of bodies angels live in. This comes in the form of feeling a peace, feeling happy with our neighbor, feeling loved by others, and all those other moments we can recall from the past when we knew the Lord was near.

We don't have to imagine what heaven will be like if we lead a good life while on this earth. The Lord allows us to taste heaven every day, if we so desire it. He does ask us, however, to remember where those wonderful tastes of heaven come from. They come from the Lord, Who watches over us daily, and wants nothing more than for us to be happy to eternity.

So this Thanksgiving, try to remember how many times the Lord has let you taste heaven, and then give thanks to Him for it. Remember this before you take a bite of food at every meal. Say with your heart, as well as with your mouth, *“Give thanks unto the Lord for He is good, for His mercy is forever.”* Amen.