

He Goes Before Us

The Lord your God who goes before you will Himself fight for you, just as He did for you in Egypt before your eyes, and in the wilderness, where you have seen how the Lord your God carried you, as a man carries his son, all the way that you went until you came to this place.

Deuteronomy 1:30–31

Know therefore today that He who goes over before you as a consuming fire is the Lord your God. He will destroy them and subdue them before you.

Deuteronomy 9:3

Introduction

When I say or write the phrase, “*He Goes Before Us*,” without any Biblical or literary context, it can mean many things. It could mean someone moving forward or stepping ahead of the one behind them in a line or a queue. It could also mean someone arriving at a particular destination before others heading to the same destination or place. It could also possibly mean, that someone was chosen or preferred for an activity or opportunity before or ahead of another individual. Additionally, the meaning of a phrase can also be influenced or shifted significantly by how

the words, in that particular phrase or sentence are emphasized or de-emphasized.

In the process of accurately understanding and effectively communicating the meaning of a word, phrase, or sentence of spiritual significance or consequence, both Biblical and literary context are essential. The context of a word, phrase, or sentence is most often effectively achieved and accurately understood when we can answer the *who, what, where, and when?* If we apply that criteria to the phrase “*He Goes Before Us*”, we would be able to quickly identify and conclude in a Biblical and literary context.

The Who as - God our Provider and Protector, Christ our Savior and Good Shepherd, Holy Spirit our Comfort and Courage

The What as - The Faith to Follow and Go Forward

The Where as - The Place of Promise and Purpose

The When as - Always Before Us

He Goes Before Us is a Biblical phrase seeking a context. ***He Goes Before Us*** is a phrase that holds deep spiritual context for the Reunion Church. ***He Goes Before Us*** is the phrase we can embrace and use as we *rise and respond to God’s call* to widen

our nets, expand our tents, and multiply the gifts and graces we have been given. In the next couple of weeks, we will unpack and seek wisdom from two Old Testament passages, rich with New Testament fulfillment and present-day relevance and implications to help us find our connection and context with ***He Goes Before Us***.

The first will be Joshua 1:1-9, regarding the transition of God's people from the leadership of Moses to the leadership of Joshua, and the occupying and actualization of the land of covenant promise and purpose. In these nine verses, God will re-up on His promise and covenant to the people to go before them with guaranteed protection and provision against all enemies and resistance. He even goes so far as to say, *"No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you."* All that God asks of them is to be strong and courageous, being careful to follow all the law that Moses gave them, without so much as turning from it to the right hand or to the left. His promise in return was that they would have good success wherever they would go.

The second passage will be from Ezekiel 47:1-12. Here we are given a detailed image of the eastbound river flowing from under

the threshold of the eastern wall of the temple toward the impossibly barren areas of the Dead Sea valley. This of course is a clear instance of symbolism, expressive of the blessings which will flow from the presence of God's Spirit in his sanctuary to other barren and suffering parts of the land. Although it is clearly a mistake to interpret or exegete this passage literally, the profound point of the Holy Spirit seen as a river flowing out from the presence of the living God is being made. He goes before us. The fact that this flowing river represents an idealized image of God's actual and abundant blessings is confirmed by passages in Psalms 46:4, 65:9, and Isaiah 33:20.

The river grows in volume as it descends eastwards through the mountains towards the Dead Sea, and before long, it becomes too deep to wade through. The sheer physical impossibility of this reveals the actual message that we can use to contextualize the spiritual symbolism for ourselves in our present circumstances. The river goes out before us from one and only one source - the presence of Almighty God. There are no other sources or contributing rivers or streams to build its volume of flow and depth - God alone. He goes before us. What this passage says and what that means is more important than the logic or detail of how it is expressed.

The context of the symbolism is the continuation of Ezekiel's tear-down and restoration vision. The prophet sees an ever-flowing stream that brings lasting fertility (restoration, new life, and a new covenant) in its wake. As the river reaches the Dead Sea, the rancid and stagnant waters there become fresh and swarm with fish, and the trees flourish on the river's banks, producing fresh fruit every month. Even the leaves of the trees will have healing properties. Most importantly is that the life-giving water for the fish, fruit and healing flows from the presence of God. The temple is to be the miraculous source of life, healing, and fruitfulness, the river is the flowing Spirit of God - the river of life. He goes out before us. By the miraculous means of the power of the Holy Spirit, the impossible will be achieved.

So we prepare our hearts Reunion Church - to faithfully follow Christ, by the move and flow of the Holy Spirit, as God the Father Almighty goes before us...