

Joshua The Servant Leader

Joshua 1:1-9

Introduction

The book of Joshua appears to have been written by Joshua although sections seem to have been added later either by Eleazar the Priest or by Phinehas his son. Joshua is specifically identified as the author in chapter 24:1-26 and is an eyewitness of many of the events (see 5:1 and the use of ‘we’ and 5:6 and the use of ‘us’).

We saw that Joshua was Moses’ Servant before he becomes Moses’ successor. The name Joshua means “Yahweh is salvation”. Joshua was a soldier and a spy and was commissioned by the Lord and Moses to carry out the conquest of Canaan. The great themes of the book include God’s faithfulness in giving the land of Canaan to Israel; the conquest of the land; the importance of the written Law of God (see Joshua 1:1;8:32-35; 23:6-16; 24:6-7). Another great theme is the holiness of God in judging the sin of the Canaanites (see Deut.7:1-7).

There is a great deal of biblical and extra-biblical support for the wicked practices of the Canaanite peoples depicted in what is called the Ras Shamra tablets; entrenched prostitution by both sexes; infant sacrifice; a religious syncretism that celebrated sin and came to mourn righteous behavior. No wonder a great theme of this book is that Canaan becomes a type and a picture of the Christian’s inheritance in Christ. Wiersbe points out that Canaan is not a picture of heaven because the Christian does not battle to possess heaven; Canaan is our inheritance—given to every Christian who claims it by faith. We move from brokenness to recovery to victory! Victorious Christian living consists of both battles and blessings. So many Christians remain in Egypt or the wilderness—but fail to secure Canaan. Some Christians have been delivered from the penalty of sin—but remain trapped by the power of sin—or overwhelmed by the presence of sin. The book of Joshua helps us understand how we can enter by faith our inheritance of rest and victory in our glorious General the Lord Jesus Christ.

And of course there are people who are offended that occupation of the land of Canaan required the removal of the Canaanite peoples. God had given these people hundreds of years to repent (Genesis 15:16-21) but they not only refused to repent of their wicked practices; but grew in their wickedness and immoral practices. Any sinner in the nations could repent be saved by faith (like Rahab in Joshua 2 and 6:22-27). Adequate warnings would be sent ahead (see Joshua 2:8-13). Unfortunately God will sometimes use war to to discipline, chasten, and sometimes even destroy nations that forget God, punish them for their sins.

Sometimes Christians want to hold on to their old life, or remain bound by old habits or sinful behaviors.

Preparation For Leadership (vv.1-5)

Joshua 1:1 (NKJV) After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, it came to pass that the Lord spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses’ assistant, saying:

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2“Moses My servant is dead. Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them—the children of Israel.

Moses was dead. But the purposes of God were very much alive. Joshua stood on the banks of the Jordan river. Joshua need to hear from the Lord. Perhaps you have come and you also need to hear from the Lord. Perhaps someone or something in your past has died—and you need to move forward in the ministry that God has assigned to you—or the task assigned to you. What has God called you to do—gifted you to do—assigned you to do. **God is willing to speak to you. But God will not speak to simply have you ignore or disobey His voice.** In ancient times God spoke sometimes through dreams or visions, sometimes through the High Priest in the Tabernacle, sometimes in an audible voice. God spoke to Moses “face to face.” Hebrews 11:1-2; “God, who at various times in various ways spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, (2) has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds”.

Joshua was listening and God was speaking. God wanted to use Joshua to fulfill God’s plans for the children of Israel.

If you are willing to listen, God wants to speak to you about His plans for you. Plans to glorify Himself. Plans to expand the Kingdom of God. Plans to mold and shape you into a fit servant or steward—as a leader in your home or your community or church. William LaSor writes; “God expects each generation to get up on its own feet and face its own problems. God does not want us to stand around saying, “Well, now look at Moses. There was a great man! We will never have another man like Moses!” . . .Moses is dead. Great man that he was, he is dead. Get up and face the problems of your day and your age! Arise, go over this Jordan. Do not long for the past. Do the work of the present, and God says, “I will be with you” (*Donald K. Campbell; No Time For Neutrality; p.13*).

Billy Graham once said; “God did not call me to reach the generation before me, or the generation after me. God called me to reach this generation.”

We find our task here and now. Each generation faces a fresh challenge. Deception, delusion, apathy and indifference and unbelief are fierce foes. Are we living in a generation more wicked, more sinful, more hardened, more jaded than any past generation? Perhaps. All the more reason to be men and women of God. All the more reason to point people to Jesus our Captain.

Some of us want to surrender to the currents of popular culture. Yet Jesus calls us to surrender to Him. A willingness to take up our Cross and follow Jesus. Some don’t want to go to Church or read the Bible or pray or discipline their children or themselves. But we must. We don’t determine our priorities. The Lord Jesus sets our agenda. Christ determines our priorities. We will surrender—either to Christ—or to our pleasures and passions. Which it will it be? Winston Churchill in a cabinet meeting during WWII was encouraging no surrender. He said, “I find it

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rather inspiring to stand alone. Nothing in life is so exhilarating as to be shot at without result.”
You might think that’s crazy talk

Warren Bennis said, “Leadership is a word on everyone’s lips. The young attack it, while scholars want it. . .bureaucrats pretend they have it, politicians wish they did. Everyone agrees there is less of it than there used to be.” Will you take the lead?

Don’t you think Joshua was filled with questions when Moses died? “What are we going to do?” How will we hear from God? Joshua was profoundly aware of the empty spot left by Moses. At the top of Joshua’s to do list:

Hear From God. God speaks. Arise, go over this Jordan. You and all the people to the land which I am giving to them. God described the task—and gives Joshua the job.

Joshua is given clear instructions on how to carry out the task. Joshua was to become commander and chief of the nation of Israel. Joshua was to take them across the Jordan to occupy the land promised to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses.

Since that time people have debated Israel’s right to occupy that land. Twice the children of Israel would be deported from the land by foreign enemies. Once by the Assyrians, once by the Babylonians. In 66-70 AD the country would be driven to war against Rome and that would result in the death and enslavement of millions of Jews. People may challenge Israel’s right to the land; or the modern state of Israel’s right to the land, but no one should challenge God’s right to give the land to whom He will. God owns the planet earth; Psalm 24:1; “The earth is the Lord’s and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein”. God claims ownership of the planet and all its inhabitants. The land was God’s gift to Israel, and it would only be won by persistent, patient, courageous occupation. **God anticipated resistance by its inhabitants.**

It must have brought great comfort to Joshua to know that he was called by God for the task at hand.

*3Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses.
4From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the River Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your territory.*

The Lord would require occupation by faith and fact. The people would be required to march with their own feet in their own land.

The boundaries stretched from the wilderness in the South (Egypt), to the forests of Lebanon in the North, the Mediterranean Sea would form the western border and the eastern border would stretch as far as the river Euphrates. At the height of of Israel’s occupancy, during the Kingdom years of David and Solomon, the children of Israel had influence but not rule over all the lands

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promised. The land promised included not only the modern territories of Israel, but large portions of Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Iraq! **To this day God's promises of Israel's borders remain largely unfulfilled.**

For the Christian Jesus is our land. God's borders stretch from the book of Genesis to the end of Revelation. We are promised earth and heaven. God has given you promises in Christ. We could spend days and years on all the promises promised to you in Christ. We could speak of abundant life (John 10:10); crowns of life (Rev.2:10); a future heavenly home, a new name, answers to prayer, assurance, cleansing, comfort, companionship, deliverance, divine sonship, everlasting life, fellowship with Jesus, fruitfulness, gifts of the Spirit, glory after death, God's protecting power, growth, guidance, hope, inheritance, joy, knowledge, liberty, peace, Shall I go on? Power for service, renewal, rest, restoration and of course your future resurrection from the dead. Have you discovered God's will for your life? Are you aware of His promises?

5No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you.

The Lord promised to be with Joshua the way He was with Moses. This promise was repeated to Solomon (see 1 Chronicles 28:20) and given to us in Hebrews 13:5-6;

"Let your conduct be without covetousness, and be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." 6 So we may boldly say: The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"

The Call To Courage (v.6)

6Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them.

Why does God command strength and courage? God promised the Land to Joshua. God promised Joshua would divide the land among the Children of Israel and give them their inheritance. **The occupants of the land would not go quietly. Joshua would need strength and courage for the hard fought military campaigns that were to be a part of his future.**

Here courage is more than resolve—it is Divine Nerve—prompted by God's promise—and permission—it is God's permission to go forward in spite of obstacles. Courage is divine fire fueled because we are acting under the Lord's instructions. Courage is the steadfastness of faith which looks to the Lord and counts on Him to give the victory in the midst of conflict (see 2 Samuel 10:12).

The Lord will never command you to do something or be something without giving you the resources to accomplish His command. Let me put it another way. God does not give

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commands without promises. **The Lord promised Joshua a lifetime of repeated victories over his enemies, based on The Lord's unfailing promises, power and presence!**

President Woodrow Wilson once said, "I would rather fail in a cause that will ultimately succeed, then to succeed in a cause that will ultimately fail". God swore to Abraham (Gen.13:14; 15:18; 17:7) and Isaac (Gen.26:3) and Jacob (Gen.28:13) occupation of the land.

God has also promised that cause of Christ will triumph over the lies of Satan. Jesus is Lord. God wanted to use Joshua in a critical time in the history of Israel. I believe God wants to use us in this critical time in history—for God's glory and God's kingdom and God's gospel. By divine right, by divine contract, by divine promise Israel has title to the Land. But I believe they will struggle to occupy all the land until they have a right relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. The same is true for you and me. We must act with strength and courage in the promises of Christ for our lives!

Peggy Noonan was a former Presidential speech writer: "The bravest things we do in our lives are usually known only to ourselves. No one throws a ticker tape parade on the man who chooses to be faithful to his wife or the lawyer who didn't take the drug money."

What is the place and where is the land God has called you to occupy?

The Call To Courage and The Power Of The Word (vv.7-8)

7Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go.

The Lord again commands strength and courage. Only this time it is more emphatic; 'only be strong and very courageous'. Donald Campbell has a very interesting comment on this verse; he writes; "This exhortation is stronger than that of verse 6, indicating that it takes more strength of character to obey God's Word that to win military battles!"

8This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

The book of the Law is a reference to the first five books of Moses. Some scholars argue there was no written record no Bible at this point in history. Wrong! God says, "This book of the Law" was God's Word for Joshua's generation. The Bible is God's Word for every generation. God is in effect saying to Joshua; "Do you want to succeed? Do you want to have victory in your life? If you don't want to fail, listen carefully! Do you want to succeed in your Christian

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walk? Do you want to have repeat victories over the world, the flesh and the devil? Do you want repeat victories over sin? George Bernard Shaw said, “Liberty means responsibility. That’s why most men dread it.”

Are you sick and tired of the roller coaster ride of success and failure, victory and defeat? Do you want the courage to walk in the Word of the Lord? Then listen! The Lord tells Joshua to do the following:

1. Speak the Words of Scripture. The book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth. What does that mean? He was to talk about God’s Word all the time. What do you talk about? Don’t get me wrong. I am not saying there is no room for conversation about sports or hobbies, the economy or food or world events. I am not saying there is no room for movies or entertainment. I am not saying you can only read Christian books with Christian themes. But do you spend most of your time praying, reading, worshipping, loving, serving the Lord?

2. Meditate on the Word Day and Night. Mediate means to ponder, consider, reflect, or think about. When Joshua wasn’t speaking the Word of God he was thinking about the Word of God. 2 Corinthians 10:5 says, “casting down all arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.” We capture our thoughts. We reign them in. We turn them over to Jesus.

3. Do the Words of Scripture. Do all that is written in it.

Joshua is promised a life-time of repeat victories. Joshua had received instructions about Israel’s *borders* and now Joshua receives instructions about Israel’s *books*. **Joshua must both read and heed ‘This Book of the Law.’**

The Call To Courage And The Presence Of The Lord (v.9)

9Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

This is the third time the LORD calls on Joshua to be strong and of good courage. The Lord has given Joshua the promise of the Land. The Lord has given Joshua the promise of His Word. Now God reminds Joshua—you will not simply possess my promise and my Word but you will also be the recipient of God’s very presence. “. . . *for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.*”

Joshua will face trials. He was to go and occupy a land. The problem—it was occupied by a people who did not want to leave. You are to occupy Christ. The problem—sin dwells in our hearts. The people in the land had large armies and fortified cities. I suspect at times Joshua felt overwhelmed and under resourced; Joshua may have had moments where he felt weak and inadequate. Just like you. Just like me. There may be things in your life that don’t want to

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leave. God knows we face fear, discouragement and pain. But the Lord says; you have my promise. You have my power. You have my presence.

The Promise of the Land (vv.2-4).

The Promise of His Presence (v.5).

The Assurance He Will Keep His Word (vv.6-9).

Conclusion

Years ago I served as an assistant Pastor in Calvary of Albuquerque. The Lord impressed on me the need to go and plant a church. The Lord gave me this passage Joshua 1:1-9. My wife and I were praying about where we should go and what we should do. I gave myself ‘the test’. If I had a million dollars and could live off the interest what would I do with my life? If I didn’t have dime in my pocket what would I do? If I knew I was going to live another 40 years or only give one year to live—what would I do? The answer was always the same—go plant a church.

Two weeks after we sold our house my wife was diagnosed with cancer. We had to make some decisions. Do we still go? Do we stay and get treatment?

When we came to Denver I had to trust God for a job. That was easy compared to cancer. We had to trust that God would bring people to the Bible study and stay! That was easy compared to cancer. We had to trust God for a place to meet! That was easy compared to cancer. We had to trust God to pay our bills. That was easy compared to cancer.

When the Lord said, “I will be with you—I thought that meant Texas, or Florida or Colorado. I didn’t know it meant—I will be with you—in the hard times, the dark times, the difficult times. The promise wasn’t simply about topography or geography—no matter where God calls you on the map—He will be with you in your heart.

The promise of God and the power of God and the presence of God will be with you as we walk into a future—and we move from being broken—to recovery—to a life-time of repeated victories over our enemies.