

LESSON#1**CONQUERING: JOURNEYING WITH JOSHUA****Lesson #1****APPRECIATING THE LITERATURE****OR****A GENERAL LOOK AT THE BOOK****JOSHUA 1:1-2**

“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: ‘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.’”

JOSHUA 24:29

“Now it came to pass after these things that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being one hundred and ten years old.”

The exploits described in the book of Joshua detail the journey of a Conqueror for God. His life and leadership are models for us as we journey with our Joshua - Jesus. Joshua was the military commander under Moses. After Moses’ death he led the Israelites in their conquest of Canaan. Joshua overcame opposition and obstacles in conquering, by divine enablement, the land God had promised to Israel.

His life is an example and encouragement to all God’s people who desire to be overcomers and live on the promises of God while on their way to that “*better country*” (Hebrews 11:16) The record of Joshua’s warfare with God’s enemies gives us guidance and hope as we “*fight the good fight of faith.*”

JOSHUA, THE MANUSCRIPT**THE PRELUDE TO THE BOOK****Hebrew History**

The Patriarchs of Israel, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob with his twelve sons, had lived in the land of Canaan before going down to Egypt where they were enslaved. Now their offsprings were back home – almost. The people of Israel had been living on borrowed land for 490 years. Now, based upon God’s promises, land, lots of land lay ahead. As Eugene Peterson writes in the introduction to Joshua in *The Message*: “Land. Land flowing with milk and honey. Promised land. Holy land. Canaan land. The land.” The book of Joshua is about that land and its conquest.

The background of the saga recorded in Joshua, is an amazing story. The five books of Moses chronicle the history of the people from the beginning. When we come to the book of Joshua we find them at the Jordan River across which was their homeland. Their recent past experiences included:

Exodus From Egypt

For 490 years the Israelites had been captives in Egypt. God chose and commissioned Moses to confront Pharaoh and effect the release of this captive nation. Pharaoh balked, but after the ten plagues which God sent upon Egypt, he reluctantly let Israel go. However, he

soon regretted his decision and pursued the escaping slaves, catching up with them at the Red Sea, where God parted the waters for His people and Pharaoh's pursuing army was drowned.

Wilderness Wanderings

This migrating mass of mankind, freed from the rigors of slavery in Egypt, found themselves in a strange and hostile environment. They must depend upon God to miraculously provide food, water, guidance and safety and this He provided for 40 years. This included manna from heaven and water from the rock.

During this time Moses led the people from Egypt to Canaan, from the Red Sea to the Jordan River. The record of this period of time is chronicled in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

THE PREVIEW OF THE BOOK

The book of Joshua stands as a bridge - a link between the five books of Moses and the rest of the Old Testament scriptures. It is a continuation of the theme in the Pentateuch and is introductory to the 12 historical books which follow it.

Joshua details the leading of Israel into Canaan. Moses led the people *out* of Egypt and Joshua led the people *into* Canaan. They were two different types of leaders with two distinct but related missions. The book covers a period of about 25 years and describes one of the most memorable invasions in history, the conquest of Canaan.

The events in the book of Joshua can be outlined as follows:

- APPOINTING THE LEADER – CHAPTER 1
- APPRAISING THE LAND – CHAPTER 2
- APPROACHING THE LAND – CHAPTERS 3:1 - 5:12
- APPROPRIATING THE LAND – CHAPTERS 5:13 - 12:24
- APPORTIONING THE LAND – CHAPTERS 13 - 21
- APPEALING TO LEADERSHIP – CHAPTERS 22 – 23
- APPENDING THE LEGACY – CHAPTER 24

THE PURPOSE OF THE BOOK

Beyond the historical value of the book are the moral and spiritual lessons which are for our edification. 1 Cor. 10:11 tells us, "*Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition.*"

And 2 Tim 3:16-17 says, "*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*"

Every verse of Holy Scripture has truth for us. However, there are overriding themes in each book that underscore the purpose for its writing. The book of Joshua contains at least five themes running through it which have practical value for us today:

a. *The first is the Faithfulness of God.*

Perhaps the main purpose of the book, from God's perspective, is to provide an official and authoritative account of God's faithfulness. It constitutes a vital message from the living God to His people in every age telling of a faithful God Who is perfectly able to keep His promises. God had promised to give Israel a land - to borrow words from a Western folk song, "land, lots of land under starry skies above"- and He keeps His promise!

b. *Second, the book demonstrates the importance of the written Word of God.*

Read 1:8; 8:32-35; 23:6-16; 24:26-27.

In the days of Joshua, the authoritative body of written truth consisted of the five books of Moses. With the addition of Joshua to the canon, the continuity of Holy Scripture is demonstrated.

c. *Third, it shows the failure of human effort apart from divine direction.*

When Joshua and the people of Israel were faithful to God's Word and His will, there was victory. When they abandoned His will in favor of their own genius, there was failure.

d. *Fourth, the book is a commentary on God's holiness and His judgment of sin.*

The destruction of the cities and inhabitants of Canaan was not merely to give Israel military control of the area, but it was the judgment of God upon the wickedness in the land. (Read Gen. 15:16 and Deut. 7:5-6)

e. *Fifth, it provides a key to a conquering life in our personal spiritual warfare.*

It has been suggested that the book of Joshua corresponds to the book of Ephesians in the New Testament. Both are about claiming the inheritance promised by God. The word "inheritance" is used over 50 times in Joshua. The book of Ephesians is about our possession and inheritance in Christ.

Ephesians Inheritance Verses

Ephesians 1:11 informs us: *"In Him (Christ) also we have obtained an **inheritance**, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will...."*

Eph 1:13-14 *"...you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our **inheritance**."*

Eph 1:18-19 *"the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His **inheritance** in the saints."*

Ephesians 5:5 *"For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any **inheritance** in the kingdom of Christ and God."*

JOSHUA, THE MAN

Meet Josh! The man Joshua, the son of Nun, of the tribe of Ephraim, was born a slave in Egypt. Although our focus is upon the man and ministry of Joshua, we cannot properly understand his ascendancy to prominence apart from another man, Moses. Moses was the greatest leader in the O. T. - he knew men, he trained them, he led them, and they followed him.

No leader has ever had a more difficult challenge than Moses. To lead an entire slave nation out of the prison of Egypt, through the perils of 40 years of wilderness wandering to the promised land in Canaan was quite an undertaking! This Moses did and at the same time he trained the man who was to succeed him. This was an amazing accomplishment indeed!

Whatever Joshua was to accomplish in the future, must be attributed, as far as the human element is concerned, to his training by Moses. It is always that way. We all stand upon the shoulders of others.

THE NAME JOSHUA

Originally, his name was "Hoshea" or "Oshea" (Num. 13:8). Moses changed his name to "Joshua" (Num. 13:16). "Hoshea" means "salvation," but "Joshua" means "Jehovah saves" or "Jehovah is salvation." His name was changed to remind him in the future that even though he was the leader, Jehovah was his strength and salvation. In the N. T. it is clear that Joshua is a type of Christ. In Heb. 4:8, is an instance where "Jesus" should be translated "Joshua." The name "Jesus" in Greek is equivalent to "Joshua."

THE PREPARATION OF JOSHUA

Joshua is seen serving in several different and difficult roles, each one helping to prepare him for his greatest ministry.

1. A FAITHFUL SOLDIER - Ex. 17:9-13

He walks upon the stage of biblical history in the 17th chapter of Exodus. The Amalekites attacked Israel at Rephidim and *"Moses said to Joshua, choose some men and go out to fight the Amalekites"* (Ex. 17:9).

Here is Joshua's first appearance in the Bible and his first recorded assignment. Moses had observed his faith in God and his spirit of obedience and service and enlisted him as a soldier. Josephus says that Joshua was 45 years of age at the time of the Exodus. (Antiquities, Vol. I; p. 29). Moses had kept his eye on Joshua, noting his development.

Finally, the day came when Moses called on Joshua to *"choose men . . . go fight."* By this time, Joshua was a man, a mature man, a military man, and, no doubt, a man's man. He was the captain of the Moses Militia!

We all are to *"go on to maturity,"* (Heb. 6:1); to *"stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong"* (II Cor. 16:13); and be *"prepared to every good work."*

(II Tim. 2:21). "Be Prepared" is the official motto of the Boy Scouts of America, but it has always been the understood requirement of all Christian soldiers. We are always to be *"prepared to every good work."*

2. A FAITHFUL SERVANT - Ex. 24:13

Here Joshua is mentioned as Moses' servant. The words are "then Moses set out with Joshua his aid and Moses went up on the Mount of God."

Throughout the wilderness journey, Joshua stood at the side of Moses, as his assistant. Joshua played "second fiddle" to Moses. Yet there is no recorded word of complaint.

Moses was the commander-in-chief and Joshua was his humble servant. Joshua 11:15 records: *"As the Lord commanded his servant Moses, so Moses commanded Joshua, and Joshua did it; he left nothing undone of all that the Lord commanded Moses."*

No greater commendation of Joshua can be made than that which God made in Num. 27:18, *"a man in whom is the Spirit."*

Work where God has put you. Be faithful to the task that is yours at the moment. Do what is required of you now and do it enthusiastically as to the Lord. Then, in God's time, He may open the door to another place He wants you to fill.

3. A FAITHFUL SPY - Num. 13:1-14:10

Joshua was appointed as one of the 12 spies to enter Canaan and survey the land. When they returned, only Joshua and Caleb gave a positive report, the other ten spies gave a negative report. It was at this point that Joshua's spiritual qualities emerged as never before. He confronts all the people saying - Num. 14:7-9 (READ)

Unfortunately, the people did not listen and as a result wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. Joshua's experience as a spy taught him many valuable lessons and helped prepare him for his future responsibilities.

From God's viewpoint, Joshua passed yet another test for leadership - the test of faith. While 10 of the spies had doubts, Joshua and Caleb had faith.

*"Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees
And looks to God alone
Laughs at impossibilities and cries:
'It shall be done!'"*

- Faith is a requirement for sinners in order to become saints;
- it is also a requirement for saints in order to become servants of the Most High God.

In Hebrews chapter 11, the great faith chapter, we read repeatedly, *"by faith . . ."* Can you complete this statement: *"By faith (put your name) accomplished . . ."* what?

4. A FAITHFUL SUCCESSOR.

Moses knew that sooner or later another leader would be needed for Israel, and so he prayed to the Lord about it. It is recorded in Num. 27:16-17 (Read). The Lord's answer was immediate. He replied in Num. 27:18-19: (Read)

God chose Joshua. He was not elected by the people. He was not selected by Moses. He was designated by God..

In Deut. 1:38, God tells Moses to help Joshua in these words, "*But your assistant, Joshua son of Nun, will enter it. Encourage him, because he will lead Israel to inherit it.*" So Moses did just that. Read about Moses encouragement in Deut. 3:21; 31:7, 8; 34:9.

All of these experiences - that of soldier, spy, and servant - were designed by the Lord to prepare Joshua for his future leadership role as successor to Moses.

THERE ARE SEVERAL SIGNIFICANT LESSONS THAT WE CAN LEARN FROM THIS INTRODUCTORY LOOK AT THE MAN JOSHUA:

1. *First, it takes time to become prepared for leadership responsibility.*

The life of Joshua can be divided into three stages:

- The *first*, covering about 40 years, was spent as a slave in Egypt. (Josephus says he was 45 at the time of the Exodus.)
- The *second* period of about 40 years was spent as the understudy to Moses.
- The *third* stage, covering possibly 25 years, he was Israel's leader.

Many Christians want to by-pass the process of demonstrating faithfulness over a long period of time. Our tendency is to desire instant recognition, instant prominence, instant success. But this is not God's way. Paul instructed Timothy to "not be hasty" in appointing spiritual leaders. (I Tim. 5:22) Novices were not seasoned. I Tim. 3:1-7 says that leaders who have families should lead them well. It takes time to raise a family and a leader.

2. *Those who would lead others must themselves be led.*

A good leader must first learn to follow. Three-fourths of Joshua's life was spent in following.

He had been on both the bottom and top rungs of the ladder of life. He understood people He had walked where they walked.

It is unfortunate, that the word "boss" has become synonymous with the word "leader" in the minds of many even in Christian circles. But in actuality, there is a vast difference. A boss is behind, driving. A leader is in front, leading. God has no bosses - only servant-leaders.

3. *We must begin to serve God now in order to be prepared for future responsibility.*

Begin now to do the things you would do if you were a leader.

4. *Follow the best examples.*

Moses was Joshua's example, his role-model and his teacher. We should be learning from more mature and experienced leaders. Study the lives of great leaders. Read biographies, Observe those in leadership roles who are being greatly used by God.

5. *Keep your motives pure.*

Joshua served faithfully without even knowing that someday he would take over Moses' responsibilities. This is another reason why God chose him.

6. ***Faithfulness in our present assignment prepares us for service at another level.***

It is only as we pass the test that God entrusts us with more responsibility.

JOSHUA, THE MEANING FOR US

A DISTINCTION: There is a distinction between Israel and the Church.

- Israel's warfare was against physical enemies; ours is against spiritual enemies - the world, the flesh and the Devil;
- They fought *for* a position of victory; we fight *from* a position of victory.
- Their warfare was in order to gain the victory; our warfare is to maintain the victory;
- Their warfare was to take their inheritance; we have been given our inheritance in Christ.

A CLARIFICATION: Canaan is not a type of Heaven !

There are several reasons why Canaan cannot be a type of Heaven:

1. Canaan was a place of conflict.
2. Canaan was a place of death. No death in Heaven.
3. Israel could have been removed from Canaan. Eventually some were.

THE MEANING OF CANAAN FOR US

Canaan pictures the believers' present position and possession in Christ. It is a picture of the life of the believer fighting the warfare of faith here and now. That is what Ephesians chapter 6 is about – so, *“Put on the whole armor of God.”*

Warren W. Wiersbe wrote, “Too many Christians are ‘in between’ in their spiritual lives – between Egypt and Canaan. They have been delivered from the bondage of sin but they have not by faith entered into the inheritance of rest and victory. How to enter and claim this inheritance is the theme of Joshua.”

How do we live victoriously in spiritual Canaan while on our way to Heaven?

Romans 8:37

“Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.”

CONCLUSION

What about your life? Where are you in the process of demonstrating your commitment both to God and to men? Have you been faithful in the assignments that the Lord has given you in the past? But let us not forget that we are God's instruments. A holy servant of God is an awesome instrument in the hands of omnipotence!

Illust. A great violinist was due in a particular city. The newspaper reports written in advance of his concert, however, devoted most of their attention to the original Stradivarius violin he would play. The morning of the concert, the local paper even carried a picture of the great instrument. That night the concert hall filled with people, and the musician played at his best. When he concluded, applause thundered.

Then the violinist raised his instrument over his head, and smashed it across his chair. It splintered into a hundred pieces. The audience gasped in shock. The violinist explained: "I read in this morning's paper how great my violin was. So I walked down the street and found a pawn shop. For ten dollars I bought this violin. I put some new strings on it, and used it this evening. I wanted to demonstrate to you that it's not the violin that counts most. It's the hands that hold the violin."

We must ever guard against elevating the creature above the Creator; the sheep above the Shepherd; the servant above the Master; the instrument above its Maker.

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