

CONQUERING: JOURNEYING WITH JOSHUA

Lesson #2

JOSHUA, THE MISSION

Joshua 1:1

“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.’”

“When the Lion of Judah crouched by the banks of Jordan, Israel was face to face with its grand mission.” (Alfred Edersheim, Bible History, Vol. III)

The 400 plus years of misery in Egypt and the 40 years of mercy in the wilderness was behind them. Now, their true mission was about to begin. Upon the death of Moses the Lord spoke to Joshua and outlined the mission that was before him in Joshua 1:1.

Joshua’s mission was not a surprise to him. For 40 years he had known where they were going. For some time he had known that it would be his responsibility to lead this nation of ex-slaves into their homeland.

In Deut. 31:14 we read, *“Then the LORD said to Moses, “Behold, the days approach when you must die; call Joshua, and present yourselves in the tabernacle of meeting, that I may inaugurate him.”*

Therefore, the mission was not *new* to him. But it was *renewed* by God to Joshua in clear terms in Joshua 1:1 - *“Moses my servant is dead. Get going. Cross the Jordan River, You and all the people.”* (The Message)

It seems that, for some reason, or reasons, Joshua needed to be prodded to take charge and move forward. There is absolutely no evidence that Joshua was:

- an opportunist;
- that he was a “ladder climber”;
- that he put himself forward;
- that he sought great things for himself.

Rather, Joshua seems to have been content to play “second fiddle” to Moses, to remain in the background until called upon. It can be said, with ample proof, that Joshua was *available!* *Availability* is the best ability for a would-be servant of God.

Having said that, it should be added that Joshua was perhaps somewhat, shall we say *“cautiously reluctant”*, to take charge and march ahead - and not without reasons.

There Are At Least A Half-Dozen Reasons That May Have Given Joshua Pause:**1) He was successor to Israel’s greatest leader.** Deut 34:10-12

“But since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, in all the signs and wonders which the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt, before Pharaoh, before all his servants, and in all his land, and by all that mighty power and all the great terror which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel.”

- 2) **Joshua was a military man, accustomed to obeying orders.** Perhaps he was waiting on orders from Headquarters – The Divine Commander!
- 3) **The Jordan River was at flood stage!** Notice a very inconvenient truth tucked away in a parenthetical phrase in Joshua 3:15 (*“for the Jordan overflows all its banks during the whole time of harvest”*) Human reason would conclude that this was no time to attempt a crossing. Maybe Joshua was waiting for the flood to recede.

Is there anything too hard for God? The God who had parted the Red Sea forty years before could part the Jordan River at flood stage.

- 4) **He was warned that the people he was to lead would not obey God.**
Read Deut.31:16ff
- 5) **He had been in Canaan before and knew there were difficult times ahead.**
He was one of the men sent to spy out the land of Canaan. (Num. 13:8 *“from the tribe of Ephraim, Hoshea the son of Nun...”*) He spent 40 days there according to Num. 13:25.

When the spies returned this was their report:

“We went to the land where you sent us. It truly flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. Nevertheless the people who dwell in the land are strong; the cities are fortified and very large; moreover we saw the descendants of Anak there. The Amalekites dwell in the land of the South; the Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the mountains; and the Canaanites dwell by the sea and along the banks of the Jordan.” (Num. 13:27-29)

- 6) **When he and Caleb returned from the spying mission with a positive report the people wanted to kill them.**
Num 14:6-10 *“But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes; and they spoke to all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying: “The land we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land. If the LORD delights in us, then He will bring us into this and give it to us, ‘a land which flows with milk and honey.’ Only do not rebel against the LORD, nor fear the people of the land, for they are our bread; their protection has departed from them, and the LORD is with us. Do not fear them.” And all the congregation said to stone them with stones. Now the glory of the LORD appeared in the tabernacle of meeting before all the children of Israel.”*

Perhaps Joshua’s hesitantancy was the reason that he is told repeatedly to be strong and to have courage. **Notice seven times that Joshua receives verbal encouragement:**

1. Deut. 31:6 MOSES SAID: *“Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the LORD your God, He is the One who goes with you.”*
2. Deut. 31:7-8 MOSES SAID: *“Then Moses called Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, “Be strong and of good courage, for you must go with this people to the land which the LORD has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall cause them to inherit it”*
3. Deut. 31:23 GOD SAID: *“Then He inaugurated Joshua the son of Nun, and said, “Be strong and of good courage; for you shall bring the children of Israel into the land of which I swore to them, and I will be with you.”*
4. Joshua 1:6 GOD SAID: *“Be 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.”*
5. Joshua 1:7 GOD SAID: *“Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you...”*
6. Joshua 1:9 GOD SAID: *“Have 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.”*
7. Joshua 1:16-18 THE PEOPLE SAID: *“And they answered Joshua, saying, “All that you command us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. Just as we heeded Moses in all things, so we will heed you. Only the LORD your God be with you, as He was with Moses. Whoever rebels against your command and does not heed your words, in all that you command him, shall be put to death. Only be strong and of good courage.”*

OUR MISSION

We too have a mission to carry out in hostile territory. “This world is no friend to grace.” The god of this world, Satan, will oppose every advance we attempt to make for God.

That is why Paul wrote these words to the believers in Ephesus *“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”* (Eph 6:10-12)

To the Corinthians he wrote: *“Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong.”* (1 Cor 16:13)

To a youthful Timothy he wrote: *“You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.”* (2 Tim 2:1)

Jesus said, as a youth, when His parents found Him in the Temple, said, *“I must be about my Father’s business.”*(Luke 2:49) Our mission, like that of Joshua’s and Jesus’, is to be about our Father’s business. Are you consciously involved in the Master’s Mission stated so clearly in Luke 19:10 where it is recorded that Jesus said that He came to *“seek and to save the lost.”*

*"I am a pilgrim here within a foreign land,
My home is far away upon a golden strand;
Ambassador to be
Of realms beyond the sea,
I'm here on business for my King."*

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