

BIBLE SURVEY

JOSHUA

"...And you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one thing has failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spoke concerning you. All have come to pass for you; not one word of them has failed." Joshua 23:14

Saved to Serve

Joshua is a Book of Faith and obedience, where God's people are united in following His anointed leader. The Word of God is central. Joshua is a book of conquest and victory.

Crossing the Jordan

Some Christians have imagined that the Promised Land symbolises Heaven. One famous hymn contains the line: *"When I tread the verge of Jordan, bid my anxious fears subside"* depicting the river Jordan as passing through death, from this world to Heaven. However, that is a misunderstanding. While many Christians do indeed seem to wander in the wilderness, between their conversion, but not quite entering into a balanced discipleship, that is not the way it is meant to be!

Spiritual Warfare

Across the river lay many enemies, much warfare, sacrifice, injuries and death. Entering into the Promised Land was rest from slavery, but it was hardly passivity, or inactivity. Occupying the Promised Land required real, serious warfare. So too a balanced Christian life of discipleship involves much spiritual warfare, fighting the good fight of Faith.

"Be strong and of good courage... Only 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. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night... 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." Joshua 1:6-9

Delay of Disobedience

Moses led the children of Israel out of bondage in Egypt, through the Red Sea, and through the wilderness. If the people of Israel had been faithful and obedient, they could have entered into the Promised Land 39 years earlier. However, it was their disbelief and disobedience that led them to being condemned to die in the wilderness. Of all the men over 20-years-old that crossed the Red Sea, only two, Joshua and Caleb, entered into the Promised Land.

The Law leads us out of bondage to the world. Jesus leads us into battle with the world.

The Joshua Generation

A new generation had been trained and disciplined in the wilderness. They responded wholeheartedly: *"All that you command us we will do, and wherever you send us, we will go."*

Joshua 1:16

Step Out in Faith

As Moses led the children of Israel through the Red Sea, so Joshua now led them across the swollen Jordan River. However, the ministers were commanded to carry the Ark of the Covenant

and step into the River Jordan first, before the Lord made a path for them through the Jordan. They had to step out in Faith.

As Moses led the children of Israel **out** of Egypt, so now Joshua led the children of Israel **into** the Promised Land.

Confrontation

As Joshua was walking outside the camp near Jericho, he was confronted by a man standing with a drawn sword. *"Are you for us, or for our adversaries?"* The answer came back: *"Neither, but as Commander of the Army of the Lord, I have now come."* Joshua fell on his face and worshipped and said to Him: *"What does my Lord say to His servant?"*

Christophany

Joshua was commanded to take off his sandals because the place where he was standing was holy. This was not an Angel of the Lord, but The Angel of the Lord. A Christophany, a pre-incarnational appearance of Jesus Christ Himself.

Commander

Joshua was reminded that although he was the General of the Armies of Israel, he was under the Commander of the Army of the Lord. If you are not under authority, you have no authority. The Lord does not come to bless our plans, but to give His orders. The question is not: *Is God on our side?* But, *Are we on God's side?* **"Whoever is for the Lord, come to Me."** Exodus 32:26

Jericho

The first target was the fortified city of Jericho. With a double wall, both 30 foot high, and the inner wall 12 feet thick, it was a formidable stronghold.

Successful Strategy

The strategy given by the Lord to Joshua required marching around the city with all the armed men, for 6 days. On the 7th day, with the priests leading, they were to march 7 times around the city and on the 7th time, all the trumpets were to be blown and all the men were to give a mighty shout. As the fortifications fell, the armies of Israel were perfectly poised, as they surrounded the city, to charge in and take the stronghold. The harlot, Rahab, and her family were spared, to honour the promise of the spies, whom she had helped.

Defeat at Ai

After such an amazingly easy victory, the children of Israel became overconfident, and underestimated their next target, Ai. Only a small contingent was sent to sieze this fortified city. There they were put to flight and fled in disgrace. As the news of this shocking defeat came, Joshua fell face down on the ground before the Ark of the Lord and prayed.

Prayer and Action

The Lord rebuked Joshua: *"Get up! Why do you lie thus on your face? Israel has sinned..."* Joshua 7:10-11. There is a time to pray, and there is a time to act. Prayer must never be an excuse for disobedience and inaction. Prayer is a foundation for obedient action, not an alternative to it. We also need to understand the difference between Faith and presumption.

Sin in the Camp

God exposed Achan, who had stolen and hidden gold, silver and a garment, in violation of God's express command that there was to be absolutely no looting of this city. *"Be sure your sin will find you out!"* No one lives to himself alone. Sin can affect the whole community. Sometimes an entire nation suffers from the sin of one individual. Everything has consequences.

In the New Testament, Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead for lying to the Holy Spirit. Just as Achan died for the sin he brought into the camp, so the early Church was to learn that sin is serious and everything has consequences.

Divide and Conquer

Joshua's military strategy was to cut the Promised Land in two. By seizing Jericho and Ai in the centre, and driving to the sea, they were then able to conquer the Southern kingdoms and then the Northern kingdoms separately. After years of strenuous fighting, the land was divided amongst the tribes of Israel.

The Courage of Caleb

The testimony of Caleb is most inspiring: *"I was 40 years old when Moses the Servant of the Lord sent me from Kadesh Barnea to spy out the land and I brought back word to him as it was in my heart. Nevertheless my brethren who went up with me made the heart of the people melt, but I wholly followed the Lord my God. So Moses swore on that day, saying, 'Surely the land where your foot has trodden shall be your inheritance and your children's forever. Because you have wholly followed the Lord my God.' Now behold, the Lord has kept me alive, as He said, these 45 years, ever since the Lord spoke this word to Moses, while Israel wandered in the wilderness; and now, here I am, this day, 85 years old. As yet I am as strong this day as on the day that Moses sent me; just as my strength was then, so now is my strength for war, both for going out and for coming in. Now therefore, **give me this mountain...**"* Joshua 14:7-12

Give Me This Mountain!

We do not know the names of the other 10 scouts, but the names of Joshua and Caleb are honoured forever. They may have given the minority report, but God was with them. Caleb and Joshua were not lukewarm, passive and inactive. They were not half-hearted, nor faint-hearted. They were **wholehearted**. Even after 45 years of faithful service, Caleb did not hide behind any excuse, he still wanted to be involved. He did not want to retire from life, or from warfare. He did not ask for an easy assignment, but chose the honour of a hard and difficult assignment: *Give me that mountain!* (Joshua 14:7-12)

He was saved and preserved for a purpose. ***"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me!"*** Philippians 4:13

"Submit to God, resist the devil and he will flee from you!" James 4:7

Ending Well

The Bible tells us of many who began well but ended badly. Lot, King Saul, Solomon and Demas, were some of those who ended shamefully. It is not so important how we begin the race. What is of the greatest importance is how we end the race. May we be able to say with the Apostle Paul: ***"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the Faith."*** 2 Timothy 4:7

Memorial Stones

After crossing the Jordan River, God instructed the children of Israel to take stones from the riverbed, one for each of the twelve tribes of Israel and set up a monument that future generations would be reminded of what God had done there. At the end of his long and productive life, Joshua set up another memorial stone as a witness of the Covenant that the children of Israel had chosen to obey the Lord (Joshua 24:27).

Mount Ebal and Gerizim

The Covenant was renewed by the children of Israel in the centre of the Promised Land. The blessings of the Covenant were proclaimed from Mount Gerizim. The curses of disobedience were proclaimed on Mount Ebal before all the people of Israel as they responded with a hearty ***Amen!*** to each aspect of the Covenant.

"Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua..." Judges 24:31

Moses and Joshua

In the Law of Moses there is promise, but in Joshua: **Fulfilment**.

In the Law is legislation, but in Joshua: **Application**.

In the Law the Covenant is established, in Joshua the Covenant is **expressed**.

The Pentateuch has the cause, Joshua shows the **effect**.

God blesses obedience and He punishes disobedience.

Joshua is both history and prophecy. God speaks to Joshua and He speaks through Joshua.

In the Gospels the Lord Jesus taught that before you go to battle you must count the cost.

Hall of Faith

Matthew's Gospel includes Rahab in the royal lineage of David and of our Lord Jesus Himself. Both Joshua and Rahab are honoured in the hall of Faith in Hebrews 11, as part of the great cloud of witnesses that should inspire us to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus and run with perseverance the race set before us.

The Blessings of Obedience

In his farewell speech, Joshua reminds the children of Israel of God's faithfulness, His provision, His protection and guidance. He reminds us that when we are obedient to the Lord, He blesses us with victory. When we are disobedient to the Lord, we suffer the consequences and experience defeat.

*"Now, therefore, hear the Lord, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the river and in Egypt. Serve the Lord! ...**Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve... but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!**"* Joshua 24:14-15

Balanced Discipleship

Preaching on the Book of Joshua, Charles Spurgeon commented: *"Pray as if it all depended on God, and work as if it all depends on you."*

Jesus in Joshua

The Book of Joshua makes it clear that we are Saved to serve, to fight the good fight of Faith. God's servant is mostly a soldier. The name Joshua means *Yahweh Saves*. Joshua is the Hebrew form of what the Greek New Testament translates as *Jesus*. Joshua is the Hebrew form of Jesus: *Yahweh Saves*.

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