

GOD'S COMMISSION TO JOSHUA

TEXT: JOSHUA 1:1-9

Introduction:

1. Joshua is first mentioned in Exodus 17:9. "And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek."
2. The Amalekites had initiated an unprovoked attack upon Israel at Rephidim. God gave Israel a great victory that day (cf. Ex. 17:8-16).
3. Joshua proved himself a strong soldier and leader. Exodus 17:13 says, "And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword."
4. Joshua went on to become Moses' assistant ("minister" or "servant").
5. In Exodus 24:12, we read, "And the LORD said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them."
6. "And Moses rose up, and his minister Joshua: and Moses went up into the mount of God" (Ex. 24:13). Moses took Joshua with him, and he left Aaron and Hur in charge of the people.
7. Unfortunately Aaron was not as strong a leader as Moses and Joshua, and things got out of hand while they were up in the mount (Exodus 32).
8. In Joshua 1, the Lord informed Joshua that now that Moses was dead, the mantle of leadership had fallen to him. We have here in Joshua 1, God's commission to Joshua.

I. GOD'S WONDERFUL PROMISES (1:3).

1. After the death of Moses, the LORD told Joshua to pass over the Jordan River, along with all the people of Israel, to take possession of the land which the Lord had already promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and their descendants (1:1, 2).
2. The LORD gave this wonderful promise to Joshua, "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses" (1:3).
3. God promised the Israelites the land, but they had to appropriate that which God had promised them.
4. First, they had to enter the land.
5. Then they had to conquer the land. This meant battling fierce adversaries. The warlike Canaanites had strong fortified cities, but if

- the Israelites trusted the LORD and obeyed the LORD, He would surely give them the victory (cf. 6:1-5).
6. There are many lessons for us in the life of Joshua. If you consider the boundaries of the promised land, you will note that the Israelites never appropriated the entire area promised by God.
 7. The territory actually conquered and possessed in the time of Joshua was much less than what had been promised (1:4). For example, they never conquered Lebanon.
 8. Even during their greatest era, the days of King David and King Solomon, the Israelites never conquered the entire promised land.
 9. Today, of course, Israel occupies only a small portion of the land promised to them by God. They will acquire all the promised land when the Lord Jesus returns in glory.
 10. Why didn't Israel acquire all their land under Joshua? Apathy, unbelief, carnality, and disobedience kept them from claiming all that God wanted to give them.
 11. There is an important lesson here for us. God has given us wonderful promises but we have to appropriate them by faith.
 12. The Scofield Study Bible (and many others) says, "In a spiritual sense the book of Joshua is the Ephesians of the Old Testament. 'The heavenly' of Ephesians is to the Christian what Canaan was to the Israelite and blessing through divine power (Joshua 21:43-55; Eph. 1:3)."
 13. Ephesians 1:3 says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."
 14. God "hath blessed us," not "will bless us" or "may bless us," etc.
 15. We tend to think of these blessings as some vague spiritual blessing waiting for us in heaven, but these "heavenly places in Christ" are right here on earth.
 16. Just like the Promised Land was right here on earth.
 17. Many people think "crossing the Jordan River" symbolizes leaving this world and going to heaven, but that is not true. Israel had to conquer the Canaanites and Hittites and other fierce adversaries when they entered into the Promised Land.
 18. But we will fight no battles up in heaven. Our battling days will be over when we get to heaven.
 19. Jesus said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

20. We have to appropriate these abundant blessings just as the Israelites had to appropriate theirs. They fell short of the blessing, and sadly we often do too.
21. In Joshua 13:1 we read, "Now Joshua was old and stricken in years; and the LORD said unto him, Thou art old and stricken in years, and there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed."
22. Many a Christian has grown old and realized all the spiritual blessings they missed out on because of their lack of faith, and their prayerlessness, and their disobedience, and their worldliness, and their carnality, etc.
23. Let us claim the promises of God (1:3). The Bible is full of them. Our Lord said, "And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened" (Luke 11:9, 10).
24. One day in the Philippines, I was greatly discouraged. I climbed into the sidecar of friend's tricycle (a motorcycle with a sidecar). It was a beautiful Sunday afternoon. We just finished lunch, and he was giving me a ride.
25. And on the wall of his tricycle was an old sticker, and the sticker said this: "In trying times, don't quit trying. Never give up! Pray. It works!"
26. And there were two Bible verses on that sticker.
27. "And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke 18:1).
28. "Be ye strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak: for your work shall be rewarded" (II Chron. 15:7).
29. The Holy Spirit gave those words to the prophet Azariah to deliver to King Asa. And II Chronicles 15:8 says that when Asa heard these words, "he took courage" (cf. Joshua 1:6, 7).
30. And I believe with all my heart the Holy Spirit gave me those words that day. And when I went back to preach that evening the Lord gave us a great meeting.

II. GOD'S ABIDING PRESENCE (1:5).

1. You will recall that the LORD said to Moses in Exodus 33:14, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest."
2. Moses then said to the LORD, "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence" (Ex. 33:15).

3. God gave Joshua the same assurance, that His presence would be with Joshua (Josh. 1:5; cf. 1:3, 7).
4. And we have the same assurance today. Our Lord said in Matthew 28:20, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."
5. Hebrews 13:5 says, "For he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (cf. Josh. 1:5, 9b).
6. In the New Testament we see, the Lord is not only with us, He is in us. Colossians 1:27 says, "Christ in you, the hope of glory."
7. Our Lord said, "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5).
8. And, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:7).

III. GOD'S WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT (1:6, 7, 9).

1. Three times the LORD said to Joshua, "Be strong and of a good courage" (1:6, 7, 9).
2. Joshua had good reasons for being encouraged.
 - He had the promises of God (1:3-5). The great Baptist missionary to India, William Carey, said, "The future is as bright as the promises of God."
 - He had the presence of God (1:5, 9). FB Meyer said, "Let us cultivate this habitual recognition of the presence of God, it will lift us above all other fear. Let us build our cottage so that every window may look out on the mighty Alps of God's presence; and that we may live, and move, and have our being beneath the constant impression that God is here."
 - And he had the Word of God (1:8). "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple" (Psalm 19:7).

3. This brings us to my last point.

IV. GOD'S METHOD OF SUCCESS (1:8).

1. Critics have claimed that the Bible did not appear in written form until several centuries later. But Joshua 1:8 says, "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth..."

2. God's method of success is vastly different from man's method of success (1:8). Howard Taylor, the son of Hudson Taylor, the founder of the China Inland Mission, also served as a missionary in China.
3. Howard Taylor knew a commanding officer in the Chinese army who realized that his troops needed spiritual, and religious, and moral instruction.
4. But being a heathen with no knowledge of the Word of God, this commanding general decided to write his own book of instruction.
5. And once a week, he had a teacher read to the soldiers out of this book that he had written, and encouraged them, using this book as his basis and his text in religious and spiritual and moral things.
6. One day, Howard Taylor came and preached the gospel to the people, the teacher (who served as sort of a chaplain) of those Chinese soldiers was engrossed with the enthusiasm and the refreshing spirit by which the missionary opened his book and preached the gospel to the people.
7. So one day, the chaplain teacher came to him and said, "What kind of a book is this that you have? The book we have, written by our commanding officer, I have read and re-read. I have spoken out of it and spoken out of it and we are weary of it. We are tired of it. We have wrung it dry. It's a dreariness. We've heard it again and again and are tired of it. But your book, what kind of a book do you have? It seems to be to you ever fresh and ever interesting and you never seem to weary of its revelations."
8. This provided a wonderful opportunity for Howard Taylor to explain the Gospel to this heathen teacher.
9. Joshua 1:8 explains the great victories enjoyed by Joshua. Joshua obeyed the Word of God his entire life, and then when he was old he said to the people of Israel, "Be ye therefore very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that ye turn not aside therefrom to the right hand or to the left..." (Josh. 23:6).
10. Joshua and his generation obeyed the Word of God, and the Lord gave them many remarkable victories. But the succeeding generations turned from the Word of God (cf. Judges 17:6; 21:25).
11. Rejecting the authoritative Word of God, the children of Israel fell into gross sin, idolatry, apostasy, confusion, and anarchy.
12. And this is exactly what we are seeing here in America today.
13. The great statesman, Daniel Webster, sounded like a prophet when he said this over 150 years ago, "If we abide by the principles taught in

the Bible, our country will go on prospering and to prosper; but if we and our posterity neglect its instructions and authority, no man can tell how sudden a catastrophe may overwhelm us and bury all our glory in profound obscurity."

14.It happened to Israel.

15.It happened to England.

16.And it is happening right here in America.

17.Back in 1951, the chief justice of the Supreme Court, Frederick Vinson, said, "Nothing is more certain in modern society than the principle that there are no absolutes."

18.But the Bible is a Book full of absolutes. We must stand on the absolute authority of Scripture. God has revealed Himself to us through the pages of Scripture, and that is why we must uphold it as our absolute authority (cf. John 17:17; 3:16-18, 36).

CONCLUSION:

1. The message of the book of Joshua is that God keeps His promises.
2. God promised the land to Abraham and his seed, and Joshua was the man chosen by God to lead the children of Israel into the Promised Land.
3. The great theme of the book of Joshua is that God has given us these great promises but we must appropriate them by faith.
4. We must trust and obey God.
5. God told Joshua to cross the Jordan River and enter into the Promised Land (1:2).
6. Joshua obeyed God and he led the children of Israel over Jordan. This is recorded in Joshua chapter 3.
7. Crossing the Jordan River is not a picture of dying and going to heaven.
8. Crossing the Jordan River is a picture of dying to self, and entering our spiritual inheritance here and now.