

The Book of Jesus | Crossing Into the Land of Promise

The Call to Courage

Joshua 1.1-9

9.9.18

Now it came about after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' servant, saying, ² "Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel. ³ "Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses. ⁴ "From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and as far as the Great Sea toward the setting of the sun will be your territory. ⁵ "No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. ⁶ "Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. ⁷ "Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. ⁸ "This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success. ⁹ "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

Today we begin a series on the Book of Joshua... It's part of our normal yearly schedule to look at the books of the Hebrew Bible during the Autumn of each year and having finished the Torah (the Books of Moses) last year, we come next to this exciting, action-packed book of Joshua.

If you attended Sunday School as a child – it's the stories of THIS book you may remember (esp. Jericho).

It's the history of the conquest...the homecoming of God's people following that long detour, wandering in the desert 40 years after they refused to believe God.

You may remember from Numbers CH 13... only two of the scouts came back from their excursion into the land – only two of the twelve urged the nation to trust God and go into this land flowing with milk and honey... The other 10 spies whispered about the giants in the land and how God was tricking them.

The two scouts who believed were Joshua and Caleb. And now the task to bring the NEXT generation IN to the Land of Promise falls to the believing general, Joshua... Today, we hear his

charge from God, a call to courage... the famous words, “Be strong and courageous...for the LORD your God is with you” (1.9)

It’s a call WE all need to hear... especially IN this age of anxiety and change and uncertainty; we ALL need to know how to get courage... Joshua can help us.

Let’s look at 1) Joshua the Man, 2) Joshua the Name and 3) Joshua and Me

Probably he was about 20 years younger than Moses and probably he was well known to the Israelites even when they were slaves in Egypt. He’s introduced for the first time in Exodus CH 17 and it appears that everyone already knows him.

That was the scene when Moses is about to be stoned by the people for NOT leading them to water and God tells Moses to call the people and the elders to a trial... and God will stand in the place of the accused... And as the Presence of God is standing on the rock, Moses is told to take the rod of justice and hit the rock... AS IF GOD IS BEING JUDGED IN THE PLACE OF MOSES... and water bursts out of the Rock.

And the lesson is – “You people deserve judgment but I, the LORD, will take your judgment...and out of My taking the justice YOU deserve – you will be saved... the water of life is given to the thirsty.” (It’s a picture of Christ being judged in our place...and the New Testament says, “Christ IS the Rock...” [1 Cor. 10.4])

And immediately AFTER that scene, Joshua makes his first appearance in another very clear symbol of what Jesus Christ would later accomplish. Moses calls Joshua to protect the Israelites who have been attacked by Amalek... “Go fight the invaders!”

And as Joshua leads the soldiers into battle, Moses lifts his arms in prayer (like this) and when his arms are up... Joshua and his armies succeed and when Moses puts his arms down, the Israelites fail.

You may remember that Aaron and Hur have to support Moses’ arms so the battle can be won. As Moses makes a cross – the victory is won by Joshua... another symbol of things to come. That’s the first time we meet this man, Joshua, Son of Nun, the general.

He becomes the personal assistant of Moses. He goes up on the Mountain with Moses. He’s there when Moses came down to find the people dancing around the golden calf.

He’s there when Moses enters the Tabernacle and meets with God “face to face”. In fact, at one point they can’t get Joshua to leave the Tabernacle... He is apparently fascinated by God’s presence. (Ex 33.11, 15)

He's there when Moses prays, "LORD, if you don't accompany us – we aint moving! YOU and YOUR presence are all we have!" (Joshua hears that!)

And of course (there are other episodes) the one we most remember is when Joshua and Caleb really stand out... When all the other scouts/spies will NOT trust in the good promises of God and will NOT go take the Land...ONLY Joshua and Caleb protest and say, "Wait! We've seen the land – look at this fruit we've brought back...this evidence that God was telling the truth - the Land IS good and He will give us this Land as He promised...God can be trusted!"

And when the people believe the whispers about the giants in the Land instead of believing the clear promise of God...then the people are doomed to wander the desert 40 years until that whole generation dies... and ONLY the believers, Joshua and Caleb and their families are spared and will be able to go in and receive the gift...the Home God promised.

And it's after that scene...after Joshua believed God and begged the people to take God at His word...only THEN...does Moses change the young man's name to Joshua... Yeah, that wasn't the name his parents originally gave him when he was born a slave in Egypt. They actually named him, "Hosea" (like the prophet); Hosea means "help/rescue".

But after that fateful day...when the people flaked out and wouldn't trust God and Joshua believed God, Moses began to call Hosea, Son of Nun, by a new name...the name "Ye-Hosea" (what WE pronounce as Joshua) meaning "YHWH is his help" or "YHWH will save."

And... when Moses is told that he would NOT be able to take the people into the Land of Promise, God tells Moses, "Don't fear! Though YOU have failed – I will raise up a new leader to bring My people Home – I will give them the Land by the hand of Yehoshua."

Where Moses fails – Joshua will succeed.

And you see...of all the names that COULD have been given to the Messiah, when Messiah arrived, the Name given to the parents by the angel Gabriel was the name, Joshua (which means "YHWH will save") – "You shall call His name Joshua because He will save His people from their sins..." (Mat 1.21)

He could have been called, "Solomon" because He would build the True Temple...He could have been named, "Noah Christ", or "Jacob Christ" or "Samson Christ" but the ONE character from Israel's history after whom the Christ/Messiah was named is Joshua.

It's the same exact name in the New Testament – (Joshua is translated into Greek as Iesous – the name of Jesus) and I hope you can begin to see why!

Where Moses fails – Joshua succeeds in bringing God’s people into their inheritance – the Home where they’ve never been! Where the Law of Moses fails to save us – Jesus (the New Joshua) succeeds.

Our obedience to the Moses can’t save us (Rom 8.3; 10.1-4) but looking to the Cross and to Joshua who fights our battle – THAT will save us. His very name is “salvation” – the New Joshua IS “YHWH who saves”.

Joshua son of Nun succeed Moses and Joshua the Son of God succeeded John the Baptist – both the Joshuas finished what a fore-runner could NOT.

Yeshua, son of Nun stands on the verge of Jordon...and his ministry begins as he crosses the Jordan River and Yeshua, the Son of God also begins His ministry when He steps into the Jordan River to be baptized...

Both Joshuas appoint twelve leaders. Both will go through the Land and conquer it by the sword – Joshua by a physical sword and the New Joshua, Jesus Christ, will conquer the Land by the sword that comes from His mouth – the Word of God.

Joshua son of Nun is commanded to have courage and that courage is based on two truths – he has the Presence of God (“I am with YOU”) and he has the Promise of God (“I will give YOU this Land”) BUT Jesus, the True Joshua, IS the Presence and Promise of God! In Him, God has come among us, God is present; God is incarnate in the New Joshua, Jesus Christ!

And IN this Second Joshua, Jesus the Messiah, “all the promises of God are yes and amen” (2 Cor. 1.20). In the Better Joshua, Yeshua, Son of God we have the presence and promise of God in fullness!

Many of the early Christian writers, the Church Fathers, recognized the significance of the Name and they saw (what we’ll hope to see in coming weeks) that the final book of the Bible tells a story of the Perfect Joshua who conquers a great city with seven trumpet blasts... The parallels (two Joshuas) are too many to ignore.

And that brings me to this question of COURAGE. How can this book that begins with a call to courage – courage that we all NEED to walk with God in this “Brave New World” – to fulfill our own mission in these days and to eventually get to the Home where we LONG to be but have never been...how to get courage?

Point THREE: Joshua and Me – Well, first, we have to be clear on our marching orders. We are not called to a military campaign as the ancient Israelites and NOR are we called to sort of define the mission as we wish (“Gee! I’m trusting God for a new Bentley but He’s let me down!”

OR “I’m believing God to keep me perpetually young...healthy...handsome...” Make sure what you’re pursuing is what God has promised!

Second, you CAN trust, you can ONLY trust, this True and Final Joshua, Yeshua Christ, to bring you Home.

Moses can’t take you there. Obeying the Law...being a good person... going to church...loving people... even loving God WILL NOT GET YOU TO THE HOME WHERE YOU’VE NEVER BEEN! The only obedience that will get you to Heaven is a perfect obedience, a flawless righteousness... and the only One who ever achieved it is the Second Joshua, Jesus the Messiah.

Tell God, “Lord, I have failed... I have sinned... I have provoked You to Your face and I deserve JUSTICE... but I thank YOU that Justice has been satisfied in Yeshua Christ... I want to STOP depending on my good life (which – let’s face it – ISN’T that good!) and instead I want to put all my confidence in Jesus Christ... I trust Him and Him alone, who lived the perfect life IN MY PLACE and suffered the penalty I deserved and whose sacrifice was accepted – God raised Him from the dead to demonstrate it!”

“Moses failed...but Joshua brought them Home... and I have failed to keep the Law of Moses... but Jesus Christ has done what we could never do...So we trust Him and we rely totally on Him (we will not defend ourselves – we have a Defender – His very Name is salvation.)

Last, as we trust in Jesus Christ, we find the truest reason to have courage. We find what the martyrs and missionaries have found – a reason to sing even when they were persecuted and many died.

The first Joshua was given the word of God. The last Joshua IS the Word of God.

The first Joshua was given the promise of God – the Last Joshua IS the Presence and Promise of God. We can trust Him to bring us Home and everything else is small potatoes! Nothing can really hurt the real ME when the True Joshua is FOR me... He is YHWH who saves and the Door into the Home where we long to be...and He can be trusted with every aspect of your life... your past, your present and your future.

That’s the reason for courage – the reason the call makes sense: “be strong and courageous...for IN Jesus Christ, the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”