



God Instructs Joshua Joshua 1

Introduction

We know little of Joshua's personal life and family except that he was the son of Nun from the tribe of Ephraim (Numbers 13:8) and therefore a descendant of Joseph. In addition, the LORD had told Moses that Joshua was, "*a man in whom is the Spirit*" (Numbers 27:18). Interestingly, the title "*son of Nun*" is mentioned many times in the Book of Joshua (1:1; 2:1, 23; 6:6; 14:1; 17:4; 19:49, 51; 21:1; 24:29), although we know nothing about Joshua's father, Nun. The lack of detail about Joshua stands in contrast to the many personal details recorded of Moses. The force of Moses' personality is inescapable whereas Joshua's personality is not so much described as implied.

Outline of Joshua Chapter 1

- I. Joshua's Official Position - Joshua 1:1-2
- II. Joshua's Orders - Joshua 1:2-9
- III. Joshua's Officers - Joshua 1:10-18

I. Joshua's Official Position - Joshua 1:1-2

- A. Advanced from Being Moses' Assistant - Joshua 1:1-2

1. Moses the *servant of the LORD* - 1:1

Moses had been God's servant so faithfully that he is recognized as a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. *Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession Christ Jesus, who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was faithful in all His house* (Hebrews 3:1-2).

Let us review the highlights of Moses' faithful service:

- he courageously confronted Pharaoh;
- led Israel out of slavery in Egypt;
- molded a nation of between one and two million people;
- pleaded for them in prayer when they sinned;
- interceded for them when God would destroy them;
- led them through forty years of wandering in the wilderness;
- led until that generation died (except Caleb and Joshua);
- commanded the new generation to victory in battle;
- brought them to the border of the Promised Land.

2. Death of Moses - 1:2

God revealed to Moses that he would die and not be allowed to enter the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 31:14). God graciously led him to the top of Mount Nebo to view the panorama of Israel's inheritance and Moses died there (Deuteronomy 34). God buried him and the devil disputed over his body for some reason which we are not told (Jude 9). Joshua probably recorded Moses' death and eulogized him. *But since then there has not arisen a prophet like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face* (Deuteronomy 34:10).

3. Joshua, the new leader

Joshua had been commissioned by Moses as his successor (Numbers 27:22-23), and the LORD personally authorized him as the new leader after Moses' death (Joshua 1:1-9). *Now Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him; so the children of Israel heeded him, and did as the LORD had commanded Moses* (Deuteronomy 34:9).

4. Joshua's prior position and experience

Joshua was born a Hebrew slave in Egypt, as were Moses and all the Israelites. He was forty years old at the Exodus. Moses appointed him commander of the troops and Joshua led them to victory over the Amalekites (Exodus 17:9-10, 13). He was with Moses on Mount Sinai, came down the mountain with him, and witnessed the people's worship of the golden calf (Exodus 32:15-17). He was one of the twelve men selected to spy out the Promised Land (Numbers 13:2, 8). Joshua and Caleb were the two who gave the minority report, *Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it* (Numbers 13:30; see also 14:6).

- B. Invested with Moses' Authority - Numbers 27:15-23

Toward the end of his life, Moses had asked God to raise up his successor, knowing he could not choose his own, for that prerogative belonged to God. This revealed the spiritual pattern for succession, God appointed and God anointed leaders. Moses himself had been chosen by God and called at the burning bush (Exodus 3). He had not chosen the job, but it seems he grew to love it as he faithfully led and cared for God's people. He had taken responsibility and executed his assignment to the best of his ability, including praying for his replacement when the time came. God answered Moses' prayer of faith by naming Joshua.

This illustrates the continuity in the leadership of God's people, which was unbroken until Jesus Christ came, the ultimate leader, appointed and anointed by God. The word for "anointed" is "Messiah" in Hebrew and "Christ" in Greek. Jesus, our Joshua, is literally Jesus the anointed one, who came in the fullness of the time...to redeem us and lead us out of bondage into the promised freedom and fullness of life which God intended for us (Galatians 4:3-5).

C. Seasoned and Spirit-Filled

During his forty year preparation, Joshua learned six important lessons, as pointed out by Francis Schaeffer in Joshua and the Flow of Biblical History:

1. "God will not tolerate the rebellion of men against himself." Joshua learned this through defeating the Amalekites.
2. "Power belongs to God, not to the general or armies." While Joshua and the troops fought, Moses prayed them to victory.
3. "Sin is terrible." Through sin the people debased themselves and angered Moses.
4. "God could and would guide."
5. "God's glory is to come first." In this Moses was Joshua's mentor, for Moses faithfully put God's glory ahead of his own self-aggrandizement.
6. "Stand with God even when the majority is totally against you." Joshua witnessed this truth in Moses and also demonstrated it along with Caleb.

Though not a strong nor charismatic personality, Joshua was a Spirit-filled man (Numbers 27:18; Deuteronomy 34:9). He was humble and obedient and became an invincible, dynamic leader.

II. Joshua's Orders - Joshua 1:2-9

A. Promise with Directions - Joshua 1:2-3

Joshua's orders came directly from the LORD (1:1).

1. "Arise, go over this Jordan" - 1:2

What an exciting moment it is when specific orders are received to move ahead. The spies had been the only Israelites to cross the Jordan in over four hundred years. Now many hundreds of thousands were to cross over!

- 2 "To the land which I am giving to them" - 1:2

The children of Israel, the descendants of Jacob through Isaac, Abraham's son, are the heirs of this real estate.

3. "Every place that the sole of your foot will tread" - 1:3

However, they would have to conquer it. Likewise, there is much given to us in Christ that we have to appropriate. This means we must recognize our inheritance in Christ as our possession from God and take it by faith. When Jesus said, "*the kingdom of heaven suffers violence and the violent take it by force*" (Matthew 11:12), He referred to the spiritual battle God's people engage in for His will to become a reality on earth (Matthew 6:10). His orders to us are still, "*Occupy till I come*" (Luke 19:13, KJV). This does not happen automatically. Satan occupies the territory by "squatter's rights" until he is ousted by the faith, prayer, and action of God's people. However, God is the ultimate victor. This is territory that must be reclaimed as a result of the fall (Genesis 3). Each generation has the opportunity to do it. God's children are given all the equipment necessary for victory. But it will not happen through us unless we take God at His word and move forward in faith. Are you doing this? How?

B. Promised Land Boundaries - Joshua 1:4

1. "From the wilderness" -- from where they had come - south
2. "And this Lebanon" - north, as we know it today
3. "As far as...the River Euphrates" - northeast, not from the Persian Gulf, but where it curves around and flows out north of Lebanon
4. Encompassing "all the land of the Hittites" (which was never fully taken)
5. "To the Great Sea" (Mediterranean Sea) - west

C. Promise of God's Presence and Power - Joshua 1:5

1. "As I was with Moses "

What a great precedent! Miracles, signs, wonders, power, answered prayer, unfailing direction, and God's personal presence were all observed by Joshua in his illustrious predecessor.

2. "So I will be with you"

God had not exhausted His power through Moses. In fact, God's power was not even diminished. It was fully available to Joshua. How this promise must have comforted Joshua as he faced the task of leading the people.

3. "I will not leave you nor forsake you"

The Lord Jesus made the same promise to those who follow Him (John 14:18; Hebrews 13:6). He will never leave us nor forsake us. The same power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead is at work in us (Ephesians 3:20). It is spiritual power, the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8). It is a power infinitely greater than that of the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki (1945), the explosion of Mount Saint Helens in Washington which blew out the side of the mountain and was many times the magnitude of a hydrogen bomb (1980), and the impact and explosion of jumbo jets which toppled the twin towers of the World Trade Center (2001). The power of the Holy Spirit is beyond imagination and is ours by faith in God and His promises.

D. Primary Command: *Be Strong and of Good Courage* – 1:6

This command is so important God repeats it three times (1:6, 7, and 9) and the people repeat it in verse 18. Joshua's responsibility was clear. God would provide the plan with the power and Joshua was to provide faith in action. Do you shore up your courage when the going gets difficult? Do you remind yourself of the God you serve? Do you renew your eternal perspective? Or do you shrink back at the hint of adversity? As a believer, your God-given will must be exercised daily in little choices if you are to make the best big choices and influence others for His glory.

E. Pentateuch Focus: The Book of the Law – 1:7-8

1. "Observe to do" - 1:7

What was Joshua to observe and do? "*All the law which Moses My servant commanded you*", referring to all that was written in the Pentateuch. This was all Joshua had, but it was enough. It is evident that the Law was written and available to Joshua. He may have had the original writings passed on to him by Moses himself.

2. "Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left" - 1:7

Strict obedience was required. This meant reading and knowing the Book of the Law. Do you commit time and prayer to understanding God's Word? How much time do you spend daily with the Lord? Do you then obey what you have learned from your time in His Word? If not, why not?

3. "Shall not depart from your mouth" - 1:8

According to Deuteronomy 6:7, God's Word should fill our daily conversation and lives.

4. "You shall meditate in it day and night" - 1:8

How noble our thought life would be if we meditated in God's Word every day and every night. Meditate means to bring it up again and again and chew on it as a cow does with her cud as it passes through her several stomachs. The psalmist wrote, *Oh how I love your law; it is my meditation all the day* (Psalm 119:97). This is how we can bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Psalm 1, which introduces and sets the tone for the entire book, reveals that the one whose *delight is in the law of the LORD* and *meditates* [in it] *day and night... shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also will not wither; and whatever he does will prosper* (Psalm 1:2-3). Are you like a well-watered tree bringing forth fruit for the kingdom of God?

F. Pathway to Success – Joshua 1:8-9

Success is such a huge part of our culture and it can easily become an idol. Those who are successful are assured of fame and fortune. Yet success is mentioned only here in the entire Bible. God is more concerned about our faithfulness to Him and fruitfulness for Him. The real key to success is not education, nor talent, nor hard work, but rather meditating on God's Word. Do you give the Bible proportional weight, time, and interest with your other interests and pursuits? If not, your successes may turn to ashes in your hands.

III. Joshua's Officers - Joshua 1:10-18

A. Prepare the People – Joshua 1:10-11

Joshua commanded the officers to pass through the camp giving the order to "*Prepare provisions for yourselves, for within three days you will cross over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land which the LORD your God is giving you to possess.*"

B. Two and a Half Tribes of Trans Jordan – Joshua 1:12-15

The Reubenites, Gadites, and half-tribe of Manasseh had already received their inheritance east of the Jordan River. Nevertheless, they could not settle there until all their countrymen had received their allotted land. It took seven years to conquer the land, but it is not recorded whether these men saw their families during that time. They may have gone back and forth between campaigns.

C. The People's Enthusiastic Agreement -
1:16-18

1. *"All that you command us we will do"* -
1:16

It is not stated whether it was the two and a half tribes or the entire nation responding affirmatively, nor does it matter. Their spirits were willing and eager.

2. *"Wherever you send us we will go"* - 1:16

3. *"Just as we heeded Moses in all things, so we will heed you"* - 1:17

This may or may not have been encouraging to Joshua as he remembered the many times Moses experienced the people's forgetfulness and disobedience. Nevertheless, they pledged themselves to follow him.

Who have you pledged to follow? The way you spend your time and your money reveals the answer to that question.

Applications

1. Will you tell our great leader, the Lord Jesus Christ, you will follow Him with sincerity wherever He leads you? What is the first step you will take as you make that commitment?
2. Will you plan each day and night to set aside time to meditate on God's Word? How will you make that happen?
3. Whom will you encourage to enter into the promises God has for His people?