

A HARD ACT TO FOLLOW

Joshua 1



What an epitaph! “Since then no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face.” This was no overstatement. The ministry of Moses was so great that it would be difficult to imagine anyone who would match it, much less surpass it. He was the leader who set free a whole people. His ministry gave birth to a nation and included miracles of so immense a proportion that they became synonymous with the great power of God. His leadership of a vast multitude, in one of the harshest geographical areas imaginable, seemed a Herculean task. And, as if that was not enough, he authored the five-fold chronicle that recorded for all time the history of his people’s beginning.

Who could fill such shoes?

Who could complete the unfinished task of bringing the “nation without a country” into their promised land?

Joshua was 85 years old and his life’s work had just begun.

- *God’s Promise: The Power, The Presence, The Book (1:1-9)*
- *Prepare the People! (1:10-11)*
- *Joshua Addresses a Special Group (1:12-18)*

What does it say?

What does it mean?

Joshua 1:1-18



¹ After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses’ aide: ² “Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them -- to the Israelites. ³ I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. ⁴ Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates — all the Hittite country — to the Great Sea on the west. ⁵ No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you. ⁶ “Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them. ⁷ Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. ⁸ Do not let this Book of

A major theme throughout the book is the continuity of Moses and Joshua’s ministries. Many parallels exist (Moses crossing the Red Sea Joshua crossing the Jordan; Moses and the burning bush/Joshua and the captain of the Lord’s host), and here the “baton” is being passed from the great prophet to his pupil.

Read Deut. 3:23-29. Why didn’t Moses enter the land?

Deut. 34:1-12 records the death of Moses. How long did the people mourn?

What does Joshua receive as a gift to enable him in his ministry?



How many Israelites were there? (see Numbers 26:51, and assume the warriors to be about one third of the nation.)

What does it say?

the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. ⁹ Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go."

¹⁰ So Joshua ordered the officers of the people: ¹¹ "Go through the camp and tell the people, 'Get your supplies ready. Three days from now you will cross the Jordan here to go in and take possession of the land the LORD your God is giving you for your own.'" ¹⁶ Then they answered Joshua, "Whatever you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. ¹⁷ Just as we fully obeyed Moses, so we will obey you. Only may the LORD your God be with you as he was with Moses. ¹⁵ Whoever rebels against your word and does not obey your words, whatever you may command them, will be put to death. Only be strong and courageous!"

¹² But to the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh, Joshua said, ¹³ "Remember the command that Moses the servant of the LORD gave you: 'The LORD your God is giving you rest and has granted you this land.' ¹⁴ Your wives, your children and your livestock may stay in the land that Moses gave you east of the Jordan, but all your fighting men, fully armed, must cross over ahead of your brothers. You are to help your brothers ¹⁵ until the LORD gives them rest, as he has done for you, and until they too have taken possession of the land that the LORD your God is giving them. After that, you may go back and occupy your own land, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave

What does it mean?

See a map for the land to be given to Israel. (It was only during the reigns of David and Solomon that the boundaries of Israel's kingdom were extended this far.)



North:

South:

East:

West:

In verses 5-9, God promises Joshua something, and asks him to respond a certain way.

Promise:

Response:

God Himself is doing something for Joshua that He told Moses to do. What is that? (see Deut. 1:38, 3:28)

Verse 8 emphasizes the Word of God as the key to Joshua's success. W.H. Griffith-Thomas in his book How We Got Our Bible, comments on meditation:

We must *meditate* (Josh. 1:8; Psa. 1:2). "Meditation" comes from a Greek word meaning "to attend," and this is essentially the idea of the Bible *meditation*. It is reading with *attention*. More than this, it is reading with *intention*. It is concerned at each point with personal application. And it must be our own thought, our own musing, our own application. The great, the primary, the essential point is firsthand meditation on God's Word as the secret of Christian living.

Dr. Andrew Murray has reminded us in one of his books that milk represents food which has already passed through digestive processes before it is taken by us. So we may say that all the little books of devotion, the helps to holiness, the series of manuals of thought and teaching, however valuable, represent food which has passed through the spiritual digestion of others before it comes to us. And it should be used as such. If these helps are put first, to the exclusion of the Bible alone, and the Bible day by day, they will become dangerous and disastrous, crutches that prevent vigorous exercise, and lead to spiritual senility. If they are put second, they become delightful and valuable, inspirations to further thought and pathways to deeper blessings. When we have had our own meditation of the Word, we are the better able to enjoy what God teaches us through others of his children, and especially those whom God honors with special gifts of teaching.

What does it say?

you east of the Jordan toward the sunrise."

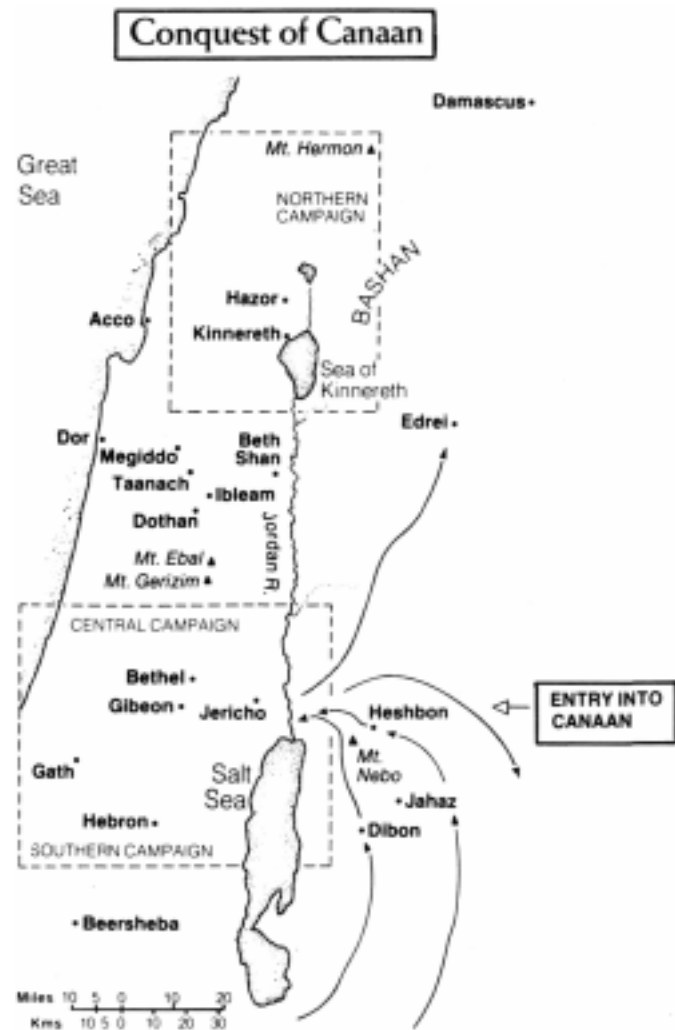
¹⁶ Then they answered Joshua, "Whatever you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go." ¹⁷ Just as we fully obeyed Moses, so we will obey you. Only may the LORD your God be with you as he was with Moses. ¹⁸ Whoever rebels against your word and does not obey your words, whatever you may command them, will be put to death. Only be strong and courageous!"

What does it mean?

In verses 12-15 Joshua turns to 3 tribes in particular and addresses them. Why? What is the issue here? (see Numbers 32)

How many "fighting men" were there? (see Joshua 4:13)

How do they respond?





APPLICATION - So What Does This Mean in My Life?

1. God's promise of His presence encouraged Joshua to be "strong and courageous." In what area of your life do you need to be strong and courageous right now?
2. Joshua was impressed with the need to place a high priority on the Word of God. How are you allowing the Scriptures to infiltrate your life? (If the Bible is difficult for you to understand, ask a friend to sit down with you and explain some basic study methods.)
3. Try this exercise: *meditate* this week on the character of God as it is expressed in Joshua 1:1-9. Share your insights with a friend.
4. How are God's word and success related?
5. In what ways will you be prosperous and successful if you meditate on and obey God's word?
6. How would you define courageous? How does one become courageous?

"Woven into the sovereign design of success for Joshua and the people was the human strand of the condition of their obedience: 'Only be strong ... to observe to do according to all the law' (1:7). They were to magnify the Word by their lips, and edify their souls is by continually meditating on its precepts. Then doing according to the law would be the inevitable fruit."

Irving L. Jensen