

Joshua Chapter 1

At the “death of Moses”, Israel’s leadership transitioned to “Joshua” (Deut. 1:38). Moses and Joshua, at the end of their lives, were each called “the servant of the Lord” by God Himself (24:29). There is no greater compliment.

Joshua is the beginning of the history of the nation of Israel in their inherited Promised Land. Joshua is the first of the twelve historical books. The book was probably penned by Joshua, himself. It really does not matter who penned it, God is the author. We learned in the books of Numbers and Deuteronomy that, he was one of the twelve original spies who searched out the Promised Land. Just he and Caleb believed they could take the land at that time. Thirty-eight years have passed since that occasion, and they are now again, ready to enter the Promised Land. Moses has died and God has put Joshua in the stead of Moses. "Joshua" means Jehovah is salvation. Joshua is the son of Nun, the son of Elishama, prince of the tribe of Ephraim. The Greek form of "Joshua" is Jesus. The main lessons that we can get from this book, are that God keeps His promises, and that life is a battle which we must enter and win.

Joshua 1:1 "Now after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD it came to pass, that the LORD spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying,"

“Joshua the son on Nun” had apparently been born Hoshea (Num. 13:8), but was renamed Joshua by Moses (Num. 13:16). His long years of service as Moses’ field commander (Exodus 17:9-16), and personal aide (Exodus 24:13), had prepared him well for this time when he would succeed his master. Joshua had served well (Exodus 24:13; Num. 14:6-10; 27:15-23), and as one who was full of the Holy Spirit (Num. 27:18; Deut. 34:9), was God’s choice to succeed Moses (Num. 34:17; Deut. 1:38; 3:28; 31:7; 34:9), to conquer the land (Deut. 3:21; 31:7), and to see to its proper apportionment (Num. 34:17). He who would lead well must first learn how to serve well (1 Kings 19:21).

Joshua was Moses’ assistant/servant (Exodus 24:13), and successor (Num. 27:15-23). He served as a military field commander (Exodus 17:9-13), was a spiritual disciple of Moses when he accompanied him up the mountain to receive the Torah (Exodus 24:13), and acted as a believing courageous spy along with Caleb (Num. 14:6-10, 30). As Israel’s new leader after Moses, he functioned as a military commander in taking the land of Canaan (verses 2-5), and as an administrator in allotting the land (verses 6-9; 13:7; 14:1-2). Joshua served as a model for all of Israel’s future kings. He was a leader possessing the Lord’s spirit and having prophetic sanction (Num. 27:18, 22). He was both a military genius and a spiritual giant. He stirred up the faith of his army by ceremony (4:1-7), word (10:25), and life (24:15). He demanded of them exact obedience to the Lord’s Word (8:35; 23:6). Joshua died at 110 years of age (24:29-31). The New Testament mentions his leading the Israelites into the Promised Land (Acts 7:45). For first reference (see Exodus 17:9; primary reference, Joshua 1:1-9).

Until the time of Moses' death, God spoke to Moses. Now He speaks to Joshua in the same manner He spoke to Moses. Notice he is called Moses' minister. He had been an understudy of Moses for the entire 40 year journey. On some occasions, he had actually helped Moses with his

ministry. The main attribute that caused God to choose him to succeed Moses, was his great faith.

Verses 2-4: God had promised the “the coast” beyond the “Jordan” (the land of Canaan), to the Israelites in His covenant with Abraham (Gen. 12:7; 13:14-17; 15:18-21; 17:8; 22:17), and repeatedly reminded the people of this during the wilderness years (see Exodus Chapters 6 and 8).

The “land” was Israel’s in accordance with God’s promise in both the Mosaic (Deut. 11:24), and Abrahamic covenants (Gen. 13:14-17). Israel’s prophesied return after a four-hundred-year exile lay at hand (Gen. 15:13-14).

To seal Joshua’s purpose, God instructed him to walk every patch of ground in Canaan, realizing that everywhere he walked, God had already given it to him and the people. Israel had no official army and no weapons, and the territory was inhabited by seven more powerful nations than them (Deut. 7:1). Yet because God had promised, Joshua could boldly lead Israel to occupy the land.

Joshua 1:2 "Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, [even] to the children of Israel."

“Unto the land which I do give to them”: This is the land God promised in His covenant with Abraham and often reaffirmed later (Gen. 12:7; 13:14-15; 15:18-21).

The chronological anchor point of (1 Kings 6:1), necessitates a date for the death of Moses near the end of the fifteenth century B.C. Because of unbelief, Moses had forfeited his opportunity to lead the people into Canaan (compare Num. 20:12 with Deut. 31:7).

Joshua had some very big shoes to fill. Moses had been a prophet who was in close contact with God at all times. We see the first directive God gave to Joshua. They were to cross the Jordan into their land of promise.

Joshua 1:3 "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses."

The words “as I said unto Moses” suggest the importance of pausing to remember God’s past faithfulness before stepping out into an unknown future. What Joshua had witnessed as Moses’ protégé would serve as assurance that God would be with him as He was with Moses.

We remember from Deuteronomy, that God had shown Moses the land of promise. It was everything west of the Jordan, all the way to the Mediterranean Sea. It went as far as Lebanon in one direction, and as far as beyond the Dead Sea to the other. Wherever they set their feet in this area was theirs.

Joshua 1:4 "From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast."

The boundaries of the land are given as “the wilderness” (i.e., the area south and east of Canaan), on the south, “Lebanon” on the north, “the Euphrates” to the northeast, and the “Great Sea” (Mediterranean), on the west. “All the land of the Hittites” meant the regions of Canaan and Syria, considered in both ancient Egyptian and Mediterranean inscriptions as a buffer state between the two great powers. Because the Hittites were one of the large ethnic groups that inhabited Canaan before the Israelite conquest (compare 3:10; 9:1; 11:3; 12:8; 24:11), and because they were a traditional power (occupying what is now Turkey and modern Syria), with whom the ancient Assyrians and Egyptians were forced to deal, the land was called Hatti (Hittite), land in international correspondence.

The going down of the sun meant as far west as they could go. The Mediterranean Sea was their stopping place to the west. The desert of Arabia on the south and Lebanon on the north were their boundaries.

Verses 5-6: Every believer who is doing God’s will can “be strong and of a good courage”, knowing that, just as for Joshua and Israel, God “will not fail thee, nor forsake thee” (Heb. 13:5). In the Great Commission, Jesus promised His presence with those He sends out to make disciples (Matt. 28:20). The Lord never leaves His people to do His work alone.

Joshua 1:5 "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, [so] I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee."

The promise of divine power for Joshua’s task.

What is promised to the people in common (Deut. 11:25); is here particularly promised to Joshua their general. And which was fulfilled in him, and still more in Christ his antitype. Who made an end of sin, destroyed the devil, spoiled principalities and powers, abolished death, and overcame the world.

"As I was with Moses, so will I be with thee": To counsel and advise, guide and direct, protect and defend, prosper and succeed. The Targum of Jonathan is, as my Word "was for the help of Moses, so will I be with thee."

"I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee": But grant him his presence, communicate strength unto him, make good his promises. And leave him not till he had made an entire conquest of the land of Canaan, and even not till the end of his days. And was true of Christ in his state of humiliation, in his sufferings and death, and even in the grave, where he was not left so long as to see corruption. As this is applied to particular believers (see note on Hebrews 13:5)

This is a reassurance from God that He would be with them in battle. He would go before them and devour their enemies. They must have faith. God never left them for the 40 years, and He will be with them now. He did not leave when Moses died. These are God's people, and He will protect them. The promise made to Abraham, Moses, Joshua and us is the same.

Hebrews 13:5 "[Let your] conversation [be] without covetousness; [and be] content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

Verses 6-9: The Lord's charge to Joshua is repeated from (Deut. 31:6-7, 23). The divine call is not only for manly courage but for a courageous faith centered in the word of God (compare 1 Chron. 22:11-13; 28:20; Psalms 27:13-14; 31:23-24). As the psalmist would later point out, true success comes from meditating deeply on God's Word (compare Psalms 1:2-3; 119:72; chapters 97, 147 and 148). Paul likewise encourages all believers to "quit you like men, be strong" (1 Cor. 16:13).

Three times God told Joshua to "be strong" (1:6, 7, 9). The word means to be "firm, resolute, not swayed" by others from the direction to which God has called a person (1: Cor. 16:13; Phil. 1:20, 27). God also challenged Joshua to be "very courageous", or "daring" (10:25; 2 Chron. 32:7). Moses used these words to encourage Joshua in the task of conquering and dividing the land (Deut. 31:6-8), as did David with Solomon when he charged Solomon with building the temple (1 Chron. 22:13; 28:20). In (1:7), this strength and courage is tied directly to obeying God's law.

Joshua 1:6 "Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I swore unto their fathers to give them."

The same exhortation Moses gave him (Deut. 31:7). And is afterwards repeated in this chapter, as being of great moment and importance. As it is in the general of an army to show greatness and strength of mind, valor and courage. And not be dismayed at the number and strength of the enemy. As Joshua's work in fighting with the Canaanites, and conquering their land, so Christ's work in the redemption of his people. And subduing their enemies, required strength and courage, and both were very eminent in him.

"For unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land which I swore unto their fathers to give them": And this promise included and ensured the conquest of it, and the putting the people into the possession of it. For if he was to divide it to them, he must first take it out of the hands of the present inhabitants. And deliver it into the hands of the children of Israel, to be possessed by them. Dividing to each tribe and family their part and portion.

Moses had been a meek man. He was quiet and mild mannered. It would take a strong Joshua to lead them into battle. We know he was courageous, because he wanted to go into the Promised Land the first time they spied it out. He was confident they could take it, even if there were giants in the land. Joshua's confidence was not in his own ability, but in God's ability. The verse above is reassuring Joshua that he would win the battle, and indeed divide the land.

Joshua 1:7 "Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it [to] the right hand or [to] the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest."

“Only be thou strong and very courageous” (see note on Deut. 31:6-8).

"Turn not from it to the right hand or to the left": From the law, by adding to it, or taking from it. So Ben Gersom explains it, "turning to the right hand is, when any adds to its words; and turning to the left hand, when he diminishes from them;" or "from him", that is, from Moses.

"That thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest": Succeed in every battle he engaged in. It would be well if generals of armies would observe this. The way to obtain victory over enemies being to be observant of the laws of God themselves. And to take care that they be observed by the soldiers under their command. Or "that thou mayest act wisely"; the word of God furnishing out instruction to men in every station of life (see Luke 3:10).

The law Moses gave them from God was a blessing, if it was kept. It brought terrible curses, if it was not kept. The law is not to be adjusted to the right or the left to fit their convenience. The law was absolute. They must have great faith, and act upon the commands of God.

1 Corinthians 16:13 "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong."

Ephesians 6:10 "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."

Joshua 1:8 "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success."

“The book of the law”: A reference to Scripture, specifically Genesis through Deuteronomy, written by Moses (compare Exodus 17:14; Deut. 31:9-11, 24).

“Meditate therein day and night”: To read with thoughtfulness, to linger over God’s Word. The parts of Scripture they possessed have always been the main spiritual food of those who served Him, e.g., Job (Job 23:12); the psalmist (Psalm 1:1-3); Jeremiah (Jer. 15:16); and Jesus (John 4:34).

If Joshua wanted to be successful, he needed to “Meditate” on (repeatedly read and recite), the words of God constantly and continually, follow them exclusively, and accept them totally (Psalm 1:1-3). Obedience begins with a relentless quest to know and take to heart God’s Word. Throughout his life, Joshua heeded what God told him in this divine consultation (23:6).

Prosperous ... success”: The promise of God’s blessing on the great responsibility God has given Joshua. The principle here is central to all spiritual effort and enterprise, namely the deep understanding and application of Scripture at all times.

This verse indicates both the existence of the “law” by the time of Joshua and its Mosaic authorship (compare 8:31-35).

Their entire lives were to be guided by the law of God. They were to hide the Words of the law in their hearts so they would never forget them. They were to think on the reason for them, as well as the demand of keeping them. The law had to become part of their very beings. They will prosper and have great success if they keep this law of God.

Joshua 1:9 "Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God [is] with thee whithersoever thou goest."

“Lord ... is with thee”: This assurance has always been the staying sufficiency for His servants such as: Abraham (Gen. 15:1); Moses and his people (Exodus 14:13); Isaiah (Isa. 41:10); Jeremiah (Jer. 1:7-8); and Christians through the centuries (Matt. 28:20; Heb. 13:5).

Joshua believed God. His courage came from his faith in God.

Verses 10-11: As soon as Joshua received his orders from the Lord, he obeyed. Delay often causes reluctance, and reluctance often breeds disobedience. When God delivers an assignment, His man or woman has only one option, and that is to discharge it with urgency (Psalm 119:60).

Joshua 1:10 "Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying,"

The same word is used in (Deut. 16:18); where it seems to design such officers that attended on the judges, and executed their orders. But one would think it should here rather signify officers in the army, as captains, and the like. Unless it should design a sort of heralds, who were to make proclamation throughout the camp. Each of the orders issued by Joshua, immediately upon his having the above directions and instructions from the Lord.

There was order in their army. God had set Joshua over all of them in civil matters. Joshua passed the word down to the officers, who in turn gave instructions to the people they were over.

Verses 11-15: Joshua prepared the people for what would come next, in part by encouraging them that they were going to “possess the land” God had promised. This is the core of the Book of Joshua: believers must take possession of what God has promised. Those blessings are like a title deed to whatever God is providing, and He wants His people to live within the blessings. For an illustration of this (see Numbers chapter 32).

Joshua 1:11 "Pass through the host, and command the people, saying, Prepare you victuals; for within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land, which the LORD your God giveth you to possess it."

“Within three days”: In some cases, events which took place before his announcement and these 3 days (compare 3:2), are described later on, e.g., Joshua’s sending two scouts to check out the Land (2:22).

Some imagine a contradiction between the details of this verse (and those of 2:22 and 3:1-2). Actually, the texts are supplementary.

- (1) In Shittim, Joshua gives the command to make ready for breaking camp (verses 10-11).
- (2) As well, he sends spies to Jericho from which, after spending a night, they flee their pursuers and take refuge in the mountains for three days (2:15-22).
- (3) Subsequently they return to Joshua, who leads the camp from Shittim to the Jordan River, where they linger another three days.

The prominence of three days in the accounts may be in harmony with a recurrent emphasis in the Scriptures on the third day as the day of special activity, spiritual decision, and newness of life and service (compare Gen. 22:4; Exodus 19:15; 2 Kings 20:5, 8; Ezra 6:15; Esther 5:1; Matt. 16:21; 17:23; Luke 13:32; 24:5-7, 21, 44-49; Acts 10:40; 1 Cor. 15:4).

The "victuals" here, is speaking of meat from hunting. They were to prepare themselves food for their battle, and for the time it would take to enter the land. They really would prepare all types of food for the trip. They will not be fed with manna in the Promised Land. At the end of 3 more days, they will pass over the Jordan River and be in their Promised Land.

Joshua 1:12 "And to the Reubenites, and to the Gadites, and to half the tribe of Manasseh, spake Joshua, saying,"

“Half tribe of Manasseh”: In (Gen. Chapter 48), Jacob blessed both sons of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh, so that Joseph actually received a double blessing (Gen. 48:22). This allowed for 12 allotments of the Land, Levi being excluded because of priestly functions.

These are those who had already received their land on the east side of the Jordan. Joshua will remind them of the promise they had made to God, to go and help the other tribes take their land.

Verses 13-18: “The Lord ... hath given you this land”: God gave them these lands directly across the Jordan River on the east (compare Num. chapter 32). Yet, it was their duty to assist the other tribes of Israel to invade and conquer their allotted land to the west.

Joshua 1:13 "Remember the word which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, saying, The LORD your God hath given you rest, and hath given you this land."

In (Num. 32:29); and to which they had solemnly agreed. And, now the time was come to put it into execution, Joshua reminds them of it. "Saying;

"The Lord your God hath given you rest": From their travels, and a settlement in a country agreeably to their own desire.

"And hath given you this land": Where they now were, and which they had taken from Sihon and Og, kings of the Amorites. And joined to Moab, on the borders of which Israel lay encamped. And by this it appears, that the settlement of these tribes, on the other side Jordan, was according to the will of God; he gave it to them.

They wanted the grazing land on the east side of Jordan and God let them have it, with the promise they would fight with the other tribes to take their land.

Joshua 1:14 "Your wives, your little ones, and your cattle, shall remain in the land which Moses gave you on this side Jordan; but ye shall pass before your brethren armed, all the mighty men of valor, and help them;"

This was what they themselves proposed, agreed unto, and confirmed (Num. 32:16).

"But ye shall pass over before your brethren armed": Bearing arms, to fight for them. For none but such that were fit to bear arms were obliged to go. And these were to go "harnessed", as some render the word, or in a military order, in rank and file, by fives, five in a row. Not at the front of the army, for the standard of Judah went first, but along with them. For "before them" signifies no other than in the presence of them, and in company with them.

"All the mighty men of valor, and help them": To obtain a conquest over the Canaanites. All, according to the order of Moses, and by their agreement, were to go. All that were able to bear arms. But Joshua did not take them all, only a select company of strong and valiant for, out of a hundred thirty thousand, but forty thousand went with him (Joshua 4:13).

Moses had inquired of God and had given them this land they loved. He also gave them time to build houses for their families to live in. The wives and the children would stay behind and care for their cattle and sheep, while the men went to war. They had not chosen this land, because they were afraid. They had chosen it, because it was good grazing land for their herds.

Joshua 1:15 "Until the LORD have given your brethren rest, as [he hath given] you, and they also have possessed the land which the LORD your God giveth them: then ye shall return unto the land of your possession, and enjoy it, which Moses the LORD'S servant gave you on this side Jordan toward the sunrising."

Rest from their travels, as they had.

"And they also have possessed the land which the Lord your God giveth them": Are settled in the land of Canaan, as they were on that side Jordan.

"Then ye shall return unto the land of your possession, and enjoy it": The countries of Sihon and Og, they were put into the possession of.

"Which Moses the Lord's servant gave you on this side Jordan, toward the sunrising": The land, given to them lay to the east of Jordan.

Toward the sunrising means it was located on the east of Jordan. The men of these tribes will go with the other tribes until they are settled in their land, then they will go home to their families. The people are great that will be fought, and God wanted all 12 tribes to stand together in these battles for the land.

Verses 16-18: One test of leadership is to find out if anyone is following the people's response ("we will do ... we will go"). This showed that the mantle had been successfully passed from Moses to Joshua.

Joshua 1:16 "And they answered Joshua, saying, All that thou commandest us we will do, and whithersoever thou sendest us, we will go."

The two tribes of Gad and Reuben, and the half tribe of Manasseh. The heads of them, such as were instructed for that purpose, and were their mouths to him.

"Saying, all that thou commandest we will do": With respect to this affair of going over Jordan with their brethren, to assist them in the conquest of the land of Canaan.

"And whithersoever thou sendest us, we will go": In what position he would have them be in the army. And to whatsoever part of the country he should send them to subdue, and to whatsoever city he should order them to besiege.

They have had ample time to prepare their families to survive, until they return. They are eager to keep their word to God. They will go into battle, wherever Joshua sends them. They were so happy with their Promised Land, they were eager to do God's will.

Joshua 1:17 "According as we hearkened unto Moses in all things, so will we hearken unto thee: only the LORD thy God be with thee, as he was with Moses."

Not right or wrong, but in all things that were according to the laws and will of God made known to them. And particularly it may refer to the above affair, which was settled between Moses and them, to whom they then hearkened. And now promise to confirm the same, and hearken to whatsoever orders and instructions Joshua should give them relative to it, according to the plan agreed upon.

"Only the Lord thy God be with thee, as he was with Moses": Which is not mentioned as a condition of their obedience to him, but rather as a reason of it. And as an encouraging motive to it. For, according to Kimchi, the true sense and meaning is, "for the Lord thy God will be with thee, as he was with Moses." So Noldius renders it, "seeing the Lord thy God is with thee."

Moses had made it very clear before his death, that Joshua was God's choice to receive his anointing. Everyone had agreed they would follow Joshua, as they had Moses. The older Israelites (their fathers), had not hearkened unto Moses. They died in the wilderness. The new generation had listened to Moses. They promise to follow Joshua too. It was almost like a prayer for Joshua when they said, "Only the LORD thy God be with thee".

Joshua 1:18 "Whosoever [he be] that doth rebel against thy commandment, and will not hearken unto thy words in all that thou commandest him, he shall be put to death: only be strong and of a good courage."

Refuses to go over Jordan with his brethren the children of Israel, when commanded by Joshua so to do.

"And will not hearken to thy words in all that thou commandest him": Or, if he does go over, yet will not obey orders to take such a post. Or go against such a city, or march into such a part of the country.

"He shall be put to death": His part of military discipline they agree to, and hereby declare their entire submission to him as their general. Some understand this as spoken by all Israel, and of their promise of obedience to Joshua, as their governor in all things.

"Only be strong, and of a good courage": Which also is not to be understood as a condition of their submission and obedience. But as a hearty wish and prayer for him, that he might have strength and courage necessary to the great work he was engaging in. And which to see would be no small encouragement to follow and obey him.

Disobeying the commandments of God was certain death. To rebel against the commandments, is rebelling against God. They must have faith, not fear. Faith pleases God.

Joshua Chapter 1 Questions

1. Joshua is the beginning of the _____ of the nation of Israel in their Promised Land.
2. How many historical books are there?
3. Who, probably, penned this book?
4. Why was God sure of Joshua's faith?
5. How many years have passed, since they searched out the promised land the first time?
6. Who was the only believer in the twelve spies, besides Joshua?
7. The Greek form of "Joshua" is _____.

8. What are the main lessons we can learn in this book?
9. Why was Joshua called Moses' minister?
10. What one thing caused God to choose Joshua?
11. What was the first directive God gave Joshua?
12. What land was the Promised Land?
13. What was the great river in verse 4?
14. Describe Moses.
15. Where did Joshua's confidence lie?
16. The law was _____.
17. Their entire lives were to be guided by the _____.
18. Joshua's courage came from his _____ in God.
19. Joshua gave the orders to the _____, who gave them to the people.
20. "Victuals" in verse 11 means what?
21. Who had received land on the east side of Jordan?
22. Why did they want that particular land?
23. Who shall stay behind, and care for their land?
24. How long would the men be gone?
25. They were so _____ with their Promised Land, they were eager to obey God's will.
26. Why did the people accept Joshua as their leader?
27. What sounds like a prayer for Joshua in verse 17?
28. What will happen to them, if they rebel against the commandments?