

God gave Israel the five books of the Law, the Torah, through His servant Moses. Those books focused on God calling out a people for Himself. They tell of the dramatic story of God raising up a deliverer: Moses. God used the insecure underdog who had once fled from Egypt to save his life to deliver His people from the greatest world power. Moses led the children of Israel through forty years in the wilderness while God miraculously provided food and water for the entire nation. He dealt with their constant complaining. He interceded for them when they rebelled against God. He gave them God's rules for their nation. But then within sight of the Promised Land, Moses, the servant of God died.

¹ After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, ² "Moses my servant is dead. Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel. Joshua 1:1,2 The people of Israel often failed to listen to Moses on the way to the Promised Land. God had communicated with Moses a tiny portion of the bigger picture. There was coming another man from this nation who would be like Moses, only to this One they *must* listen (Deuteronomy 18:15ⁱ). They referred to this One who was to come as The Prophet (John 1:21ⁱⁱ).

Their experiences with Moses were foreshadowing something much greater. A Deliverer from the bondage of sin was coming. He would lead them through the wilderness of life to the promised land of heaven. But in God's plan, that deliverance was to take place in the land to which they were going. The One to whom they must listen would not fail to lead them all the way in, unlike Moses who died in the wilderness. The coming One was given the same name as the man who led the people after Moses died, Joshua (*Yehoshua* meaning JHWH saves), or as Jews would later say the name in Aramaic, *Yeshua*. That is what the angel Gabriel told Mary to name her child (Luke 1:31ⁱⁱⁱ). The Greek form is *Iesous* (Jesus - see Acts 7:45^{iv}; Hebrews 4:8^v), which is also Greek for Joshua. We can see the hand of God orchestrating history to prepare people for Jesus' first coming. It is not that Jesus happens to have the same name as Joshua, but rather that **Jesus orchestrated history to point us to what He would do.**

We should see this book we are starting a journey through as a step in God's plan to save mankind, a metaphor for Jesus leading us to heaven. Abraham and his son and grandson were promised that they would become a great nation, that they would possess the land of Canaan, and bless the world (Genesis 22:17,18^{vi}). Just as Joshua brought about the fulfillment of the physical promises to Abraham to possess the land, so the second Joshua brought to fruition the spiritual part of the prophecy to bless the world through Abraham's descendant (1 Corinthians 15:46^{vii}; Genesis 22:18^{viii}; Galatians 3:13,14^{ix}). This second Joshua had to be born in the land of promise in a town called Bethlehem, the house of bread (Micah 5:2^x). He had to minister in Galilee according to the words of the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 9:1,2^{xi}). He would redeem not only Israel, but all who will come to Him in faith (Isaiah 49:6^{xii}; Matthew 1:21^{xiii}). He would suffer and die, but He would conquer our greatest enemy in the process (Genesis 3:15^{xiv}). In our conclusion to Luke we saw how Jesus defeated death!

The land of Canaan into which Joshua was leading them was filled with vile practices, people who had rejected the words of Melchizedek, the King of Righteousness and Peace (Hebrews 7:1-4^{xv}), a people who had to be judged first so that the Jews could occupy it without being corrupted by their lurid worship practices (Deuteronomy 12:31^{xvi}). The Book of Joshua tells us how this occupation came about.

The book has three main sections: **the conquest of Canaan** in chapters one through twelve, and **the division of the land** as God promised in chapters thirteen to twenty-two. We will skim over that section as it is a list of detailed boundaries of each tribe. **The conclusion** is in chapters twenty-three and twenty-four. In those chapters Israel is exhorted to remain faithful to the Lord so that they might enjoy God's blessings. We will be focusing on fourteen of the twenty-four chapters.

Joshua had led the army of Israel against their foes in the wilderness. He was Moses' right hand man. He was the one waiting for Moses when he came down from Mount Sinai with the commandments. Joshua had forty years to observe and learn from Moses. Now the time had come for him to lead. The training was over.

I imagine that Joshua was excited, for they stood at the edge of what had been promised to them when Abraham had left Ur centuries before (1406 B.C. 1 Kings 6:1^{xvii}). But would God speak to Joshua as He had with Moses? Joshua knew their victories and survival were all due to the God who led them, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He is a covenant-keeping God, and He had covenanted to give the land to Abraham's descendants (Genesis 15:18-20^{xviii}).

Joshua had been in the land once before. He told of how fertile it was. He was ready to go in then, but the other spies told of the giant people whose size made the Hebrews appear as grasshoppers. The people were afraid and refused to go in, though Joshua and Caleb had insisted God would give them victory (Numbers 14:8^{xix}). Now the second opportunity to receive the promise had come.

Joshua knew this day was coming. In Deuteronomy 31, Moses told the people ***³ The LORD your God himself will go over before you. He will destroy these nations before you, so that you shall dispossess them, and Joshua will go over at your head, as the LORD has spoken.*** To know that the LORD would go before them was all the assurance Joshua needed. But Joshua also knew the many times the people of Israel had rebelled against God's will. The older generation had died out and the new generation had seen God's judgments fall on their fathers. They had learned from their failures and were more eager to follow the Lord. It had taken them forty years in the wilderness to purge out most of the rebellion and bring them to the place where they were ready to receive the promise.

*Both command and promise depend upon the sovereignty of God, expressed in his wise will and achieved by his irresistible power. So it is **as God's people both believe the promises and obey the commands that they enter into the experience of fellowship with God at the deepest, relational level.** The same is true for us today. Why do we so often fail to obey God's commands? Because we do not really believe his promises. The two always go together. Faith leads to obedience. Disobedience is always rooted in distrust. We will see this lesson worked out often in the book of Joshua; it is a continuing challenge that we shall often encounter in our contemporary experience of living the Christian life.^{xx}*

I want to digress for a moment to point out the typology in those words of Moses. Remember that Joshua is the Hebrew name for Jesus. Crossing the Jordan River is symbolic of death. It was the end of one way of life and the beginning of the new. Manna would stop. They went from the promise to the fulfillment. The LORD would go over before them. Jesus our Lord did pass through death before us. He is the head of the church. He leads us into the promised land, life in Christ. He will drive out our enemies: the world, the flesh, and the devil. What a picture in that one declaration, "God Himself will go over before you!"

We can see the same parallel in Moses' prayer for a successor. ¹⁶ *"Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation. ¹⁷ who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of the LORD may not be as sheep that have no shepherd."* ¹⁸ *So the LORD said to Moses, "Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him.* Numbers 27:16-18 Moses had Joshua at his side for forty years, and yet he asked God to appoint the right man to take his place. He asked for someone with a shepherd's heart to guide them. God affirmed that it was Joshua because the Spirit of God was in him. But the ultimate answer to Moses prayer is our great Shepherd, Jesus (John 10:11^{xxi}). He leads us out and brings us in. He has the Spirit without measure in Him.

Joshua was described as Moses' assistant in Exodus 24:13^{xxii}. He went up Mount Sinai with Moses as far as he was allowed. He was with Moses when he came down the mountain with the tablets. When Moses would go the tent of meeting - a type of the future tabernacle, it was Joshua who would stay behind at the tent even after Moses had left speaking with God (Exodus 33:11^{xxiii}). **It is important that God's leaders not only desire to hear from God, but that they love to be in His presence.**

Verse one calls Moses "the servant of the LORD" and the book of Joshua will conclude by naming Joshua as "the servant of the LORD" (Joshua 24:29^{xxiv}). That tells us that this book is just as inspired as the Torah. Why would the promise in the Torah be any more important than the fulfillment in Joshua? The book of Joshua is the complement to the Torah. It tells us that God is faithful to His Word. We can trust that God *always* brings His promises to pass. In fact, some people claim the Torah should include Joshua.

If there was any concern about leading the people into the Promised Land, it was the giants they had seen when they first spied out the land (Numbers 13:33^{xxv}). But Joshua had seen that the battle belongs to the Lord. We first meet Joshua when the Amalekites attacked Israel in the wilderness. Joshua led the battle. But the battle was won by Moses' hands uplifted to God. Joshua's first great victory and reputation came because of intercession. He quickly learned that the source of power is God (Exodus 17:11^{xxvi}). When Joshua led the Israelites to victory over Bashan and the Amorites Moses told Joshua that God would do the same with all the nations in the Promised Land. He was told not to fear them, for God would fight for him (Deuteronomy 3:21,22^{xxvii}).

Deuteronomy ends with Moses assuring Joshua and the nation that God would give them victory with Joshua leading them. **The most important theme is that God is with them and goes before them.** That is why Joshua can be strong and courageous. That is why he did not need to fear the giants. Moses told Joshua the promise that he had once received, that God would never leave or forsake him (Deuteronomy 31:8^{xxviii}).

Brothers and sisters, the promise is ours in Jesus. In fact, the author of Hebrews tells us the same promise is ours (Hebrews 13:5^{xxxix}; John 10:28,29^{xxx}). That is why we should be strong and courageous and never fear what we must face. Our God is the same God who was with Joshua. He has already gone before us and given us the victory over our greatest enemies, Satan and death. **The skirmishes in this life may seem difficult, but the main battle is already won, and heaven is ours in Christ Jesus who is always with us.** That is why we can be joyful even facing minor defeats. The Lamb always wins in the end. There is no power that compares!

The book of Joshua will often point to the fact that it is the Lord who gives us the victory. It is pointing to faith in God and His Word, not the man Joshua. It would be easy to imagine Joshua as a giant muscle-bound man with superhuman skills and the courage of a lion. If that was the case, why do the Scriptures command him to be strong and courageous five different times (Deuteronomy 31:6,7^{xxxix},23^{xxxii}; Joshua 1:6^{xxxiii},9^{xxxiv})? It reminds me of Saul and David. Saul was head and shoulders taller than his brothers, but David was short in stature. Saul was eventually rejected by God and we remember little David as the great warrior king of Israel. But it was because God was with him, for David was a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14^{xxxv}).

Paul reminds us in 2 Corinthians 4:7 that *we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us*. One of the faults of the church in our age is the dependence on man, on human initiative, and on clever ideas. For many people, church is a commercial enterprise. The battle is for more attendees rather than against the darkness of this world. God honors faithfulness, not numbers.

Joshua's leadership was different from that of Moses in that he had the Word of God to guide him and the established priesthood to hear from God. Today we have the written Word and all who are in Christ have become His priests (1 Peter 2:5^{xxxvi}). All who are in Christ have the indwelling Holy Spirit to be our wisdom and guide. We still have elders as the nation of Israel had, but they are dependent on the written Word of God and the Spirit within them. Instead of one man as the head, we have Christ Jesus as the head and the elders as under-shepherds (1 Timothy 5:17^{xxxvii}). This is how we confront the darkness in the world today. We make disciples as Jesus instructed us (Matthew 28:19^{xxxviii}). One soul at a time is brought into the kingdom and then built up with the Word and fellowship. It is the work of God in their hearts. He does use us as instruments, but just like the book of Joshua declares, the battle is the Lord's. It is by faith and trust that we obey the leading of the Spirit and march forward to claim the land.

As victorious and faithful as Joshua was, he was only a foreshadow of One greater to come, for after his death, the people began to turn to idolatry. We need a place of rest that will endure forever and where God is worshiped forever. A place of rest was promised to Israel, and yet it did not come to pass under the first Joshua. The author of Hebrews writes, *For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.* (Hebrews 4:8-11) The second Joshua, Jesus, tells us ²⁸ *Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* Matthew 11:28 Throughout the book of Joshua we will see these patterns played out in our daily lives.

We should consider that a number of great men of God have recently passed on. Billy Graham, Bill Bright, and Ravi Zacharias have gone to their reward. And though God may raise up others to take their places, we already have the greatest leader, for we already have the second Joshua, Jesus! And He is all we need! He is the head of the church. He is leading us into the promised land and has already gone before us into battle and defeated the giants.

In our study in the Gospel of John, we learned that the disciples were not spiritual elites. They were common people. You will enjoy watching *The Chosen* as it really emphasizes their humanity. A rabbi of that day never would have chosen them. But Jesus did. As youth, they failed to go on and learn all a good Jewish boy hoping to become a rabbi would learn. They thought they were only fit for common labor. One was even a despised IRS agent! What is Jesus doing selecting men like that? He spent the night in prayer before He chose them (Luke 6:12,13^{xxxix}). He did what the Father directed Him to do. But why these common men? Because they realized they didn't deserve to be chosen. Do you realize that? But God chose you and me anyway (Deuteronomy 7:7,8^{xl}). It is because it brings greater glory to God! It is because we are more dependent on His life in us rather than our own intellect and ability (Zechariah 4:6^{xli}).

Listen to how the Apostle Paul explained it. ²⁶ *For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth.* ²⁷ *But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong;* ²⁸ *God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are,* ²⁹ *so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.* ³⁰ *And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption,* ³¹ *so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."* 1 Corinthians 1:26-31

What can you do of eternal significance on your own? ZERO! We need Jesus' life in us and through us, anointing us for the good works He has planned in advance for us to do (Ephesians 2:10^{xlii}). Victorious living is relying on Jesus moment by moment! Most of our life is the process of learning to do just that. Great leaders have died, our beloved mentors have passed on, and now it is time for Joshua/Jesus to take over in our lives and touch the world with His love through us.

Questions:

- 1 What is the background to this book?
- 2 What is this true story foreshadowing?
- 3 Who did Moses tell the people to watch for?
- 4 What are the three sections of the book?
- 5 What had Joshua learned under Moses?
- 6 How does belief and obedience affect our relationship with God?
- 7 What was Moses' prayer for the next leader? Who was it?
- 8 What is the most important theme in the book?
- 9 How are we led today?
- 10 Why does God work through seemingly insignificant people?

ⁱ **Deuteronomy 18:15 (ESV)**

¹⁵ “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen— (“shall listen” in the ESV is translated from the Hebrew *shama*. Religiously it used daily in prayers reminding them to: “Hear O Israel! The Lord your God is one!” It is not a suggestion but a command.)

ⁱⁱ **John 1:21 (ESV)**

²¹ And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not.” “Are you the Prophet?” And he answered, “No.”

ⁱⁱⁱ **Luke 1:31 (ESV)**

³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.

^{iv} **Acts 7:45 (ESV)**

⁴⁵ Our fathers in turn brought it in with Joshua when they dispossessed the nations that God drove out before our fathers. So it was until the days of David, (The Greek original text translates Joshua as *Iesous* – the same way the name of Jesus is written in Greek.)

^v **Hebrews 4:8 (ESV)**

⁸ For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. (See note on ⁱⁱⁱ.)

^{vi} **Genesis 22:17-18 (ESV)**

¹⁷ I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, ¹⁸ and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.”

^{vii} **1 Corinthians 15:46 (ESV)**

⁴⁶ But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual.

^{viii} **Genesis 22:18 (ESV)**

¹⁸ and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.”

^{ix} **Galatians 3:13-14 (ESV)**

¹³ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”— ¹⁴ so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

^x **Micah 5:2 (ESV)**

² But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.

^{xi} **Isaiah 9:1-2 (ESV)**

¹ But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. ² The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.

^{xii} **Isaiah 49:6 (ESV)**

⁶ he says: “It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”

^{xiii} **Matthew 1:21 (ESV)**

²¹ She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”

^{xiv} **Genesis 3:15 (ESV)**

¹⁵ I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

^{xv} **Hebrews 7:1-4 (ESV)**

¹ For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, ² and to him Abraham apportioned a tenth part of everything. He is first, by translation of his name, king of righteousness, and then he is also king of Salem, that is, king of peace. ³ He is without father or mother or genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest forever. ⁴ See how great this man was to whom Abraham the patriarch gave a tenth of the spoils!

^{xvi} **Deuteronomy 12:31 (ESV)**

³¹ You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way, for every abominable thing that the LORD hates they have done for their gods, for they even burn their sons and their daughters in the fire to their gods.

^{xvii} **1 Kings 6:1 (ESV)**

¹ In the four hundred and eightieth year after the people of Israel came out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year

of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, which is the second month, he began to build the house of the LORD.

^{xviii} **Genesis 15:18-21 (ESV)**

¹⁸ On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, ¹⁹ the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, ²⁰ the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, ²¹ the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites."

^{xix} **Numbers 14:8 (ESV)**

⁸ If the LORD delights in us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land that flows with milk and honey.

^{xx} David Jackman-Preaching the Word - Joshua: People of God's Purpose.

^{xxi} **John 10:11 (ESV)**

¹¹ I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

^{xxii} **Exodus 24:13 (ESV)**

¹³ So Moses rose with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up into the mountain of God.

^{xxiii} **Exodus 33:11 (ESV)**

¹¹ Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. When Moses turned again into the camp, his assistant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent.

^{xxiv} **Joshua 24:29 (ESV)**

²⁹ After these things Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being 110 years old.

^{xxv} **Numbers 13:33 (ESV)**

³³ And there we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak, who come from the Nephilim), and we seemed to ourselves like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them."

^{xxvi} **Exodus 17:11 (ESV)**

¹¹ Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed, and whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed.

^{xxvii} **Deuteronomy 3:21-22 (ESV)**

²¹ And I commanded Joshua at that time, 'Your eyes have seen all that the LORD your God has done to these two kings. So will the LORD do to all the kingdoms into which you are crossing. ²² You shall not fear them, for it is the LORD your God who fights for you.'

^{xxviii} **Deuteronomy 31:8 (ESV)**

⁸ It is the LORD who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed."

^{xxix} **Hebrews 13:5 (ESV)**

⁵ Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

^{xxx} **John 10:28-29 (ESV)**

²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

^{xxxi} **Deuteronomy 31:6-7 (ESV)**

⁶ Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the LORD your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you." ⁷ Then Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, "Be strong and courageous, for you shall go with this people into the land that the LORD has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall put them in possession of it.

^{xxxii} **Deuteronomy 31:23 (ESV)**

²³ And the LORD commissioned Joshua the son of Nun and said, "Be strong and courageous, for you shall bring the people of Israel into the land that I swore to give them. I will be with you."

^{xxxiii} **Joshua 1:6 (ESV)**

⁶ Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them.

^{xxxiv} **Joshua 1:9 (ESV)**

⁹ Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

^{xxxv} **1 Samuel 13:14 (ESV)**

¹⁴ But now your kingdom shall not continue. The LORD has sought out a man after his own heart, and the LORD has commanded him to be prince over his people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you."

^{xxxvi} **1 Peter 2:5 (ESV)**

⁵ you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

^{xxxvii} **1 Timothy 5:17 (ESV)**

¹⁷ Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.

^{xxxviii} **Matthew 28:19 (ESV)**

¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

^{xxxix} **Luke 6:12-13 (ESV)**

¹² In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God. ¹³ And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles:

^{xl} **Deuteronomy 7:7-8 (ESV)**

⁷ It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, ⁸ but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

^{xli} **Zechariah 4:6 (ESV)**

⁶ Then he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts.

^{xlii} **Ephesians 2:10 (ESV)**

¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.