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## A JOURNEY THROUGH THE BIBLE

Reading: Joshua 1:1-9

### 7. JOSHUA

A school teacher asked a classroom of children. “ *Who knocked down the walls of Jericho ?* ” There was a long silence before a small boy said, “ *Please sir, I didn’t.* ” Later that day in the staff room the teacher recounted the incident to the headmaster. “ *Do you know what happened in my classroom today ? I asked who knocked down the walls of Jericho and that boy Smith said, ‘ Please sir, I didn’t.* ” The headmaster replied, “ *Well, I have known Smith some years, they are a good family. If he says he didn’t do it, I am sure he didn’t.* ” The headmaster reported the boys answer to a visiting school inspector, whose response was, “ *It’s probably too late to find out who did it get them repaired and send the bill to us.* ”

The joke, of course, is that everybody should know who knocked down the walls of Jericho. It’s one of the better known stories of the Bible. If they don’t know the story from the Bible, then they have heard the Negro spiritual song, “ *Joshua fought the battle of Jericho.* ” But sad to say this may be the only part of the book that people do know. Now when we come to the book of Joshua we are coming to the first of twelve historical books which start at Joshua and finish at Esther.

Now in our English Bible it’s the book after Deuteronomy. There seems to be a logical flow from the death of Moses at the end of Deuteronomy to the commission of Joshua at the start of this book. To the Jews however, the position of the book is quite different. You see, the end of Deuteronomy marks the end of the Torah, the law of Moses. As I have said before these five books are read annually in the synagogue with Genesis 1:1 starting the New Year and Deuteronomy 34:12 being read at the end of the year. Each of the five books is named after its first words seen at the start of the scroll when the books came to be selected for reading. Joshua is the first book to be known by the name of its author. You see, book records the continual story of the children of Israel, their arrival at the river Jordan and their entry into and conquest of the land of Canaan. *Joshua completes what Moses commenced.*

The great event in Moses life was the passage through the Red Sea, the great event in Joshua’s life was the passage through the Jordan. The one tells of deliverance from bondage the other of entrance into blessing. Joshua bears the same relationship to the five books of Moses as the book of Acts bears to the four gospels. Now let me point out some things by way of introduction.

#### (1) THE PENMAN OF THE BOOK:

According to the Talmud ( the body of Jewish law ) “ *Joshua wrote his own book.* ” In the last chapter of this book we read, “ *And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God.* ” ( 24:26 ) Joshua obviously did

not write the entire book as his own death is recorded in the last chapter. Joshua was originally named Oshea or Hoshea which means “*salvation*,” but Moses changed it to Jehoshua ( Joshua ) which means “*Jehovah saves*.” It is the word from which the New Testament name “*Jesus*,” is derived. So much, for the penman of the book.

### **(2) THE PERIOD OF THE BOOK:**

You see, if the conquest of Canaan was completed around 1400 BC then this book was written shortly after this date. The book of Joshua covers a period of around 25 years, the conquest itself was completed in around 7 years according to Caleb. ( 14:10 Deut 2:14 ) What about,

### **(3) THE POINT OF THE BOOK:**

What is the aim of this book ? To show us the victory of faith. In the book of Numbers we see the failure of unbelief. But the book of Joshua shows *the victory of faith*. Spiritually interpreted the exploits of Israel under Joshua proclaim that great New Testament truth, “ *This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.* ” ( 1 Jn 5:4 ) Now Joshua has been called the Ephesians of the Old Testament because most scholars see Canaan as a type of the believer’s inheritance in Christ. Canaan represents God’s full purpose for His people. Let me illustrate like this. **Egypt:** is a picture of the world, the bondage to sin. The **Wilderness:** is a picture of the defeated Christian life. **Canaan:** is a picture of victory, claiming our inheritance. Canaan illustrates the words of

Christ, “ *I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly.* ” ( Jn 10:10 ) Now some Bible readers cringe at the mention of the book of Joshua because of its military violence. There is,

### **(4) THE PROBLEM OF THE BOOK:**

Joshua is probably the bloodiest book in the Bible. That is because a wicked civilization, known for its idolatry, religious prostitution, sorcery and even child sacrifice at times was now coming under divine judgment. The discovery of the Ugarit tablets in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, gives an idea of the extent to which the religious system in the land of Canaan had corrupted itself. Do you recall that centuries earlier, in the time of Abraham, that God was not yet ready to do anything about this wicked civilization, “ *the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.* ” ( Gen 15:16 ) But now, a longsuffering God was finally ready to deal in judgment with sin. God was offended to the point of commanding the total extermination of the inhabitants of Canaan.

Should any remain they would corrupt the faith. The Lord said, “ *But thou shalt utterly destroy them .... that they teach you not to do after all their abominations, which they have done unto their gods, so should ye sin against the Lord your God.* ” ( Deut 20:16-18 ) My .... right from the start the Lord warned His people to remain separate. They were not to intermarry or make other alliances. God was saying in effect to His chosen nation, “ *If you’re careless, you will not change them, instead they will change you. Your worship of the one true God will get*

*diluted, and then polluted.*” Isn’t it sad when some Christians think they know better than God ? They want to live as close to the world as they possibly can, yet God’s unchanging standard is, “ *Come out from among them, and be ye separate saith the Lord and touch not the unclean thing.*” ( 2 Cor 6:17 ) Now having dealt with, 1, 2, 3, 4, lets look at

## **5. THE PARTS OF THE BOOK:**

For Joshua is a book of graphic movement, for we see Israel going up, winning through and settling in. Notice then, Israel,

### **(1) ENTERING THE LAND ( Ch’s 1:1-5:12 )**

“ *Joshua the son of Nun,*” ( 1:1 ) walked onto the pages of history at a crucial time in the life of Israel. He was born in Egyptian slavery round about 1500 BC. If Josephus the historian is accurate Joshua had lived for some 40 or 45 years in bondage to Egypt. Then he had spent 40 years in the wilderness under the leadership of Moses and finally as the leader of those who conquered Canaan for about 25 years. “ *Moses my servant is dead, now therefore arise,*” ( 1:2 ) What a shattering statement. Yet as Matthew Henry says, “ *God buries his workman but carries on His work.*” Israel was encamped on the eastern side of Jordan. Canaan with its giants and walled cities lay before them. The tribes of Israel were unseasoned in war but here God speaks to Joshua and encouraged him. He fixed his attention on the written Word, the fact of the divine Presence and the certainty of the divine Promise. So

Joshua is assured of,

1. The Divine Presence: “ *As I was with Moses, so I ....,*”
2. The Divine Promise: “ *I will not fail thee ....,*”
3. The Divine Plan: “ *Unto this people shalt ....,*” ( 1:6 )
4. The Divine Power: “ *Be strong and very ....,*” ( 1:7 )

So the Lord speaks to Joshua. Joshua speaks to the people and the people speak to Joshua. You see, here in this opening chapters we have,

### **(a) *THE PREPARATION OF THE PEOPLE:***

Notice that for Joshua and the people there was,

#### **1. Inward Preparation: The Law:**

As I understand it, when Joshua was about to lead the people into the Promised Land, the only Words of God he had were Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, the first five books of the Old Testament. God said to Joshua “ *This is your military manual. This will be your map. This is how you will accomplish the job I have given you.*” Did you notice what God told him to do with “ *the law,*”? He was to read the book, meditate on it day and night and obey its commands. Look if you will at ( 1:8 ) John Bunyan wrote on the flyleaf of his Bible, this phrase, “ *This book will keep you from sin, sin will keep you from this book.*” Can you not testify that to that fact ? When you get away from the Lord, the last thing you want to do is read the Word. But my .... it’s impossible to have victory in the Christian life apart from

the Word of God. Is the Word central in your life ? Do you follow it exclusively ? “ *Turn not from it to the right hand or to the left,* ” ( 1:7 ) Don’t go this way. Don’t go that way. Whatever it says you do it. 1.

## **2. Outward Preparation: The Spies:**

Joshua sends out 2 spies for a new look at the land they are about to possess. Do you recall that 40 years before 12 spies had been sent out ? The negative report from 10 of them had contributed to Israel’s refusal to enter the land. This time just two are asked to go in reflecting the number who had brought back a good report on that first occasion. Isn’t it interesting what Rahab said ? ( 2:9-11 ) There were no Bibles in Jericho, no prophets in Jericho. Jericho was a city under the curse yet here is one soul who has faith in the living God. Do you know something ? We can never limit the grace of God. Is this not a tremendous encouragement to us ? You see, there are no human situations, however unpromising, however unlikely in which the grace of God cannot operate. Did you know that Rahab became the wife of Salmon and the mother of Boaz ? ( Matt 1:5 ) Did you know that Boaz was the great grandfather of King David from his line came our wonderful Saviour ? ( Matt 1:16 ) Think of this from the Land of Canaan to the Line of Christ. Such is the grace of God.

## **3. Onward Preparation: The Ark:**

Look at ( 3:3, 11 ) Now a literal rendering of this verse would be, “ *Behold the ark of the covenant. The Lord of*

*all the earth is about to proceed before you into Jordan.* ” You see, the Ark represented the presence of God. Joshua was saying, “ *You want to know if the living God is among you ? Here’s how you will know. The ark of the covenant is in your midst.* ” They had the presence of God in the here and now. Is this not one of the most important things when facing the challenge of the future ? When facing the unknown ? To know that the Lord is with us. You see, they were guided by the Word of God, guarded by the Power of God and graced by the Presence of God. This was the (a)

### ***(b) THE PASSAGE OF THE PEOPLE:***

Would you look at ( 3:15-17 ) Harry Ironside said, “ *The Jordan River was parted so many times that the fish didn’t know which way to swim.* ” Now the Jordan River speaks of death. This river which rises high in the mountains north of Canaan plunges downwards and is called “ The Descender.” It buries itself at last in the waters of the Dead Sea from which there is no outlet. **You as the Red Sea was a judgment on Sin, so the Jordan River is a judgment on Self.** In the language of the New Testament the Jordan is entering into the truth that “ *I am crucified with Christ nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me and the life which I now live I live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.* ” ( Gal; 2:20 ) Now it’s interesting that the Psalmist speaking of these two waters says this. “ *The sea saw it and fled Jordan was driven back.* ” ( Ps 114:3 )

Do you see the difference ? The Red Sea fled before Israel

but the Jordan has to be driven or turned back. *In one sense it was easier for God to get His people out of Egypt than to get them into Canaan.* In just the same way it's easier to get a sinner out of Egypt than to get a Christian into Canaan. In a sense evangelism is easier than edification, salvation simpler than sanctification. It is one thing to bring a child into the world but quite another to bring that child up in the world. And just the same way getting into Canaan is far more difficult than getting out of Egypt. Not that it has to be that way, but we die hard. We want a Canaan with no Jordan. You see,

**The Memorial in Jordan speaks of Death: ( 4:9 )**  
**The Memorial over Jordan speaks of Resurrection:**  
**( 4:20 )**

To a person who asked him the secret of his service, George Mueller said, “ *There was a day when I died, utterly died,* ” and as he spoke, he bent lower and lower until he almost touched the floor. “ *Died to George Mueller, his opinions, preferences, tastes and will .... died to the world its approval or censure .... died to the approval or blame even of my brethren and friends .... and since then I have studied only to show myself approved unto God.* ” My .... do you realise that there can no victory without death to self ? (a) (b)

**(c) THE PURIFICATION OF THE PEOPLE:**

For it was here at Gilgal the men submitted to painful surgery. ( 5:8-9 ) Now remember to be a Hebrew male meant being circumcised. ( Gen 17:9-14 ) You see,

through this ritual the Jews became a “ *marked people,* ” because they belonged to the true and living God. But that covenant relationship had been suspended during the wilderness wanderings so God did not require the mark of circumcision but now the old generation had died and the new generation were in their inheritance and it was vital that they renew their covenant relationships with the Lord. Israel's sin at Kadesh Barnea was a reproach to them, but that was all in the past for now each bore in his body the mark that reminded him that he belonged to God. Now do you recall the two memorials ?

**The Memorial that speaks of Death; ( 4:9 )**  
**The Memorial over Jordan that speaks of Resurrection:**

Do you know something ? When Paul speaks of our death with Christ he speaks of something else. Paul says “ *For ye are dead .... mortify ( put to death ) therefore your members which are upon the earth fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence and covetousness which is idolatry.* ” ( Col 3:1-5 ) Paul is speaking of sexual vice, impurity, sensual appetites, unholy desires and all greed and covetousness. My .... how are you getting on in the realm of mortification ? “ *You have died in Christ,* ” are you therefore putting to death your earthward inclinations by the power of the Holy Spirit ? (1)

**(2) CONQUERING THE LAND ( Ch's 5:13-12:24 )**

You see, this is what the book of Joshua is all about. It's a record of the conquest of Canaan. Now it's interesting to notice the strategy that Joshua adopted for the invasion of the land. It was God inspired and God led. His strategy was simply to enter Canaan via Jericho, thus driving a wedge through central Canaan, separating the territory to the north from that to the south. He then moves in on the nearest enemies to the south. Having conquered them he turns his attention to those in the north. So you see, you can look at this,

***(a) FROM THE GEOGRAPHICAL PERSPECTIVE:***

Joshua drove a wedge straight through the middle of Canaan, and then having divided the enemy into two halves, he conquered the south then the north. This strategy prevented the forces in Canaan from uniting, dealing with each area in turn. It's a striking tribute to his God guided military genius, that by adopting exactly the same strategy General Allenby was successful in occupying Palestine in World War 1. So there was,

**1. The Central Campaign:**

This took in two cities which were deemed the most significant, namely Jericho and Ai. Jericho soon fell as Israel obeyed God, but Ai's conquest was hindered by sin in the camp. After subduing Ai, Joshua made a serious mistake. He made a league with the Gibeonites forgetting the injunction of ( 1:8 ) and the warning of the book of Deuteronomy ( 7:1-2 )

**2. The Southern Campaign:**

Took place when a powerful southern coalition, headed by Adoni-zedek king of Jerusalem ( 10:1 ) attacked Israel's new allies the Gibeonites. A forced march from Gilgal brought Joshua and his army to the scene where victory was secured. The final campaign was,

**3. The Northern Campaign:**

Which centred around the waters of Merom. ( 11:5 ) The strength of this new alliance in the north struck fear into Joshua's heart and so “ *the Lord said unto Joshua be not afraid of them for tomorrow about this time will I deliver them up all slain before Israel.* ” ( 11:6 ) Then ( Ch 12 ) completes the account by giving us a summary of the kings and major cities which fell before the sword of Israel. So you look at this from (a) but what about,

***(b) THE SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVE:***

Well,

**1. Israel were Helped by the Lord:**

Look at ( 5:13-15 ) Now who was this ? Bible scholars call this “ *a theophany,* ” that is a manifestation of God. I believe that this was one of the pre-incarnate appearances of the Lord Jesus recorded in the Old Testament. ( Gen 18:1 ) I mean here was Joshua taking a look at the city of Jericho and assessing its fortifications for the possibilities of its overthrow. Suddenly “ *he lifted up his*

eyes,” and saw this Stranger. Why had the Lord Jesus come? Too assure Joshua that he was not alone the Lord was with him. He had read in the Book of the Law what Moses had said to the Lord after Israel had made the idolatrous golden calf. “*If thy presence go not with me carry us not up hence.*” ( Ex 33:15 ) The Lord responded by saying, “*My presence shall go with thee and I will give thee rest.*” Joshua was not alone God was with him. Oh you say, “*He had several million Jews working with him.*” No, I am not talking about that. **Have you ever considered the loneliness of leadership?** When I was a young believer I came to Lurgan Baptist Church Bible Class and I was greatly helped through the ministry of Pastor Mullan. I also went to conferences all over. I am sure I did in those days what you’re doing tonight.

It's easy to look into the pulpit and say, “*These people have no problems. They have it made.*” Now I am beginning to understand the loneliness of leadership. You see, a leader has to make decisions that have far-reaching consequences. Joshua was not alone God was with him. ( 1:5, 17, ) Even the enemy knew that God was with Joshua. ( 2:10 ) But now Joshua experiences this in a very personal way. My .... its one thing to read in the Bible that God is with me, it's something else to experience this. Oh you say, “*I don't think that that God is with me the way He was with Joshua.*” I think He is. I read in ( Heb 13:5-6 ) “*For he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.*” The gospel of Matthew begins by calling His name, Emmanuel, God with us. That's the way it begins. Do you recall how it ends? “*Lo I am with you always even unto the end of the world.*” ( Matt 28:20 )

We have the assurance that in every circumstance of life the Lord is with us. Here is Joshua about to begin this campaign in Canaan and the Lord is assuring him that He is with him. Some day when you're discouraged and think you're all alone read the life of another man who conquered cities. Joshua came and declared war. Paul came and declared peace. Paul would show up at a city and declare peace, “*Be ye reconciled to God.*” ( 2 Cor 5:20 ) Paul got to Corinth and was so discouraged that the Lord showed up in Corinth one night and said, “*Paul don't be afraid I am with you.*” ( Acts 18:10 ) Paul went to Jerusalem, they arrested him. He's in jail and that night the Lord said, “*You've witnessed in Jerusalem, now you must testify in Rome.*” ( Acts 23:11 )

They are on board ship. A storm comes. The Lord shows up and says, “*Paul don't be afraid I'm going to give you everyone on board this ship.*” ( Acts 27:24 ) So Paul gets to Rome and writes to Timothy, “*At my first defence no man stood with me.*” ( 2 Tim 4:16 ) Fancy that. But Paul said, “*The Lord stood with me and strengthened me.*” ( 2 Tim 4:17 ) My .... do you realize that as you battle with the giants, possess the inheritance, and proclaim the gospel, the Lord is with you? Have you not discovered that? That He is your Helper. 1. But,

## **2. Israel were Harassed by the Foe:**

### **1. Look at the First Foe: Jericho**

In order for Canaan to be claimed, Jericho had to be conquered. Easier said than done. Jericho was a fortified

city. It was surrounded by massive walls, They tell us that its walls were 30 feet high with a 6 foot thick outer wall and a 12-15 foot gap between that and a 12 foot thick inner wall. *Now what do you think the real battle was at Jericho ? Was it with the Canaanites ? The enemy.* The more I read this chapter the more I am convinced that the real battle was not with the Canaanites at all, the real battle was with God's own people. You see, all this blowing of trumpets, all of this numerical listings of seven, all this walking around the walls. *Was this necessary to knock down a city wall ?* I mean God could have just spoken and Jericho would have disappeared. I think the real battle of Jericho was with the human heart, not with the city wall. God was seeking to overcome the Israelites rather than simply seeking to overcome the Canaanites. When victory came, it would convince God's people that the overthrow of Jericho was a victory of faith.

Indeed the Hebrew letter reminds us, “ *By faith the walls of Jericho fell.* ” ( Heb 11:30 ) *How do we overcome Jericho, the world ?* That, invisible spiritual system of evil. Well, John says “ *this is the victory that overcometh the world even our faith.* ” ( 1 Jn 5:4 ) John says, “ *You Christians don't have to walk around defeated because Jesus Christ has made you victors. He has roundly trounced every enemy and you share in His victory.* ” ( Rom 8:37 ) Now by faith claim His victory. 1.

## 2. Look at the Second Foe: Ai

You see, if Jericho reminds us of the **world**. Ai reminds us of the **flesh** that part of man's nature wherein his natural

desires have free rein. Look at ( 7:4 ) Do you know why ? There was sin in the camp. Achan stole that which had been devoted to God. Do you see that word “ *accursed,* ” or “ *devoted,* ” ? The Hebrew term refers to the irrevocable giving over of things or persons to the Lord often by totally destroying them. ( 6:21 ) Do you see what Achan did ? He robbed God and appropriated what was God's. My .... are you putting your hand on something that belongs to God ? Are you caught up in the web of materialism ? You see, while it is not wrong for us to own things, the problem comes when things own us. Is that where you are ? Are you controlled by things ? Money, business, materialism ? How do we overcome Ai, the flesh ? God says, “ *Neither will I be with you any more except ye destroy the accursed from among you.* ” ( 7:12 )

In New Testament language self must be crucified. ( Col 3:5 ) Is this God's Word to you this .... ? Are you living a life of defeat instead of victory ? Are you no longer conscious of God's presence with you ? Is it because of unconfessed sin in your life ? 1, 2,

## 3. Look at the third Foe: Gibeon

For if Jericho reminds us of the world and Ai reminds us of the flesh, then Gibeon reminds us of the devil. Alan Redpath offers wise counsel, “ *Every victory that the Christian wins is an invitation for a full-scale attack by the enemy of his soul. Every time a child of God steps into an experience of blessing, he is on the verge of another attack. Our blessings and battles go side by side.* ”



Joshua makes one of the few mistakes of his impeccable career by making a treaty, a league, with the Gibeonites. The Gibeonites deceived Joshua into thinking that they had to come to help him, when their ultimate goal was to hinder him. The Gibeonites deceived Joshua about their, Country ( 9: 6, 9 ) Contents ( 9: 12-13 ) Clothes ( 9:13 ) Consecration to God ( 9:9 ) Commitment to Joshua ( 9:9 ) My .... Joshua failed to heed God's Word. " *Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them.* " ( Deut 7: 2 ) Look at ( 9:14 ) Israel failed to seek the Lord. " *Oh, what peace we often forfeit ....*," My .... don't be friendly with the enemy, don't be fooled by the enemy, don't be fellowshiping with the enemy. Never, never trust your own judgment in anything. " *Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine understanding in all thy ways acknowledge him and he shall direct thy paths.* " ( Prov 3:5-6 ) (1) (2)

### (3) POSSESSING THE LAND ( Ch's 13-24 )

Indeed the word " *possess*," appears nearly twenty times. You see, these closing chapters are all about,

#### (a) ***THE DIVISION OF THE LAND:***

As Canaan, is divided among the 12 tribes. Individual tribes had to be assigned their various territories and each had tribe had to clean out pockets of resistance that still existed in the land though it was basically in Israel's control. The work of a nation was over, by the work of each tribe had now to begin. (a) And then,

#### (b) ***THE DEATH OF THE LEADER:***

Now ( Ch's 23-24 ) contains Joshua's farewell speeches. He first speaks to the leaders in Shiloh ( 18:1 ) and then he addresses all the people in Shechem. ( 24:1 ) Here's an old soldier on the journey home. He is on his way, he's getting ready to die. Do you see what it says in ( 24:29-31 ) ? *Oh, what an influence he had. Joshua kept Israel in the place of God's blessing. You see, one man committed unreservedly to the Lord and His Word can make an enormous impact.* J. Wilbur Chapman was preaching in England, and went to see General Booth. During the course of the conversation, J. Wilbur Chapman asked General Booth, " *General, tell me what has been the secret of your success all these many years ?* " General William Booth slowly bowed his head and replied, " *I will tell you the secret. God has had all there was of William Booth.* "

Henrietta Mears sums it up, " *The greatness of your service will be the greatness of your surrender.* " It's not a matter of us getting more of God, it's simply a matter of God getting more of us. Can I ask in closing, " *Do you have the Lord ?* " My next question is, " *Does the Lord have you ?* " Your answer will determine whether or not you will, if ever, move into the Canaan land of victorious Christian living.

