



Looking Back on the Book of Joshua

The Vision of the House for 2021

THEME: MOVING FORWARD WITH COURAGE, CREATIVITY, CONFIDENCE & COMMITMENT
Exodus 14: 13-15; Joshua 1:9; Psalm 27:13-14; Genesis 1:1-5; Isaiah 43:18-19; Philippians 1:6;
Hebrews 10:19, 35; Proverbs 3:5-6; Acts 20:20-24; 2 Timothy 2:12; Psalm 37:5

During the first quarter of 2021, our Bible studies have focused on the attribute of **COURAGE!** For the believer, courage is centered on believing God, depending on God, and trusting God for we know that without the salvation, guidance, protection, privilege, favor, provision, and love that flows from our Heavenly Father.

Who wrote the book?

The book's primary figure gives it its title. *Joshua* means "Yahweh saves," an appropriate name for the man who led Israel, under God's command, to victorious conquest of the Promised Land. Scholars believe that Joshua himself or a scribe under his direction penned most of the book. Early chapters include firsthand experiences (the NIV uses the pronouns "we" and "us" in Joshua 5:1, 6, for example) and military details worthy of being known and recorded by a general. Joshua 24:26 refers to Joshua writing a portion of the book himself. After Joshua's death, the high priests Eleazar or Phinehas may have supplemented some material in this book that alludes to events after the conquest (15:13–19; 19:47; 24:29–33).

So, Where are we?

The events of the book of Joshua span about 25 years, starting soon after the death of Moses (Joshua 1:1) around 1406 BC, before the conquest commenced. The conquest of Canaan took about seven years, and Joshua's final address and subsequent death came almost 20 years later. The book begins with the nation of Israel poised at the banks of the Jordan River, across from Jericho. It records the details of numerous military campaigns that defeated the inhabitants of the land. The book ends with Joshua's regathering of the nation for his final exhortation.

This history was **written to the victorious** Israelites who had settled the land. Though they were newly established as conquerors, Joshua reminded them that the conquest was incomplete: "very much of the land remains to be possessed" (Joshua 13:1).

Why is Joshua so important?

The book of Joshua records the **culmination of Israel's journey to the Promised Land**. Here we see God fulfill His promise to give the land of Canaan to Jacob's descendants. Joshua portrays

the Lord as their general, the One who would lead His people in victorious battle if they would but **trust and obey**.

*Joshua recounted a story of contradictions. On the one hand, God gave the land that He had promised to the nation. On the other hand, the people failed to possess the land completely, allowing some inhabitants to remain. God fulfilled His side of the bargain, but the Israelites did not finish the job. **The Canaanite peoples became a damaging influence on Israel as years went by.***

In this book we find **accounts of faithfulness**: Rahab the harlot (Joshua 2:1–21), the battle of Jericho (6:1–27), and Caleb the warrior (14:6–14). We also **witness disobedience and its consequences**: Achan's sin (7:1) and the resulting loss at Ai (7:5), failure of some tribes to annihilate the enemy as God commanded, and **even Joshua making a treaty with the Gibeonites without first seeking the Lord** (9:1–27).

What's the big idea?

The **book of Joshua was written to the descendants of those who conquered the land**, as a historical account of how they had come to settle there. **It celebrates God as general, defender, and king.** It shows the geographical boundaries given to each tribe of Israel. Even more significantly, the book of Joshua serves as the connecting narrative between the days of Moses and the days of the judges, during which the book was first circulated. ***That which Moses began and endured in the wilderness; Joshua was able to claim victoriously in the land.*** God's promises through the ages were being fulfilled before the people's eyes. *"Not one of the good promises which the Lord had made to the house of Israel failed; all came to pass" (Joshua 21:45).*

How do we apply this?

The last few verses of Joshua narrate **three burials: Joshua (Joshua 24:29–30), the bones of Joseph (24:32), and Eleazar the high priest (24:33).** Strange as it may seem, **these burials proclaim God's character.** *All three men were associated with Israel's days in captivity (Joseph long ago when Jacob's family first settled in Egypt, and Joshua and Eleazar as young men on the long journey through the wilderness).* And now **all three lay at rest in the land of promise, witnesses to God's faithfulness.**

The phrase "Be strong and courageous" is repeated across translations **25 times** in Scripture. Four of these times, this phrase is directed to Joshua (Deuteronomy 31:23; **Joshua** 1:6, 7 and 9). He also calls us to strength and courage yet from whence does our courage come? It is automatic for us to say that our strength comes from God which is in fact true. Yet there are also actions required of us to access the strength required to take hold of the strength that God provides for us. We have:

Strength in the Name of the Lord

Strength in the blood of the Lamb

Strength in the body of Christ

Our Strength comes because Christ took our sicknesses, sins, and sorrows on His own body.

We are strong because we can be healed, forgiven, and comforted.

We gain strength when we commune in the Presence of Holy Spirit.

As born-again children of God, we have immeasurable Strength!

There is strength in worship!

As we worship and focus our hearts and adoration on the Lord, we are strengthened! Worship breaks the yokes of stress and pressure to bring us into the presence of the Lord.

There is strength in having a sound mind, having our minds in line with God's Word and the direction of the Holy Spirit.

There is strength, in trusting God's strength.

There is strength in prayer. When our Father is God and Jesus our Lord and His Spirit dwells in us and we pray, God listens! The Creator listens to us individually and corporately, as the Body of Christ!

There is strength in forgiveness. Without forgiveness, we are sunk. Our sins disown and condemn us. Forgiveness from God and in forgiving others we gain incredible strength!

There is strength in right choices. When the Fruits of the Spirit dwells within us, we pass on to others the Good Fruit our character and choices should that are Christ-like. There is strength in the right character and choices!

Every day, we all empower good or evil by our actions. Right choices empower heaven to work. Wrong choices further evil and empower evil. There is strength in the character of God. There is strength in the character of God ruling and living in us.

God is the ultimate promise-keeper. He is faithful and He is as present with us today and as He was with Israel. **He is with us every moment of every day.**

So, "Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9).

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1. Donald K. Campbell, "Joshua," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1985), 325
2. Norman L. Geisler, *A Popular Survey of the Old Testament* (Peabody, Mass.: Prince Press, 2007) 93-94.