

CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE- PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian
Church, 10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 1

JOSHUA

CHAPTER 1

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK –

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.”*

INTRODUCTION

Joshua follows the Pentateuch which is the first five books of the Bible written by Moses. The Book of Joshua is the first book which is named after the human author. Francis Schaeffer, the Christian apologist, called it a bridge between the Pentateuch and the rest of the Bible. The book helps us to understand how the various books of the Bible are interrelated. We cannot understand the God given right of Israel’s claim to its present land if we do not have the book of Joshua.

The book portrays both the man Joshua, the new leader who succeeded Moses, and God who showed His faithfulness in His promise

to give the land of Canaan to the children of Israel. Joshua at this time had already attained the age of eighty but he was as fit as a fiddle. We have already learned of his character and calibre in our introductory lesson. Now we will learn how God preserved his youthful strength and ability in leading the Israelites to claim the Promised Land.

God had preserved him because he honoured and glorified God before all the Israelites at Kadesh-barnea (Numbers 14:6-10). The account in the book also shows that Joshua was a man just like we are, and not only do we learn of his strengths, but we will also learn of his weaknesses and mistakes which he made. From these we can learn to avoid the same mistakes, which he made and emulate those qualities which he exemplified. In addition to these lessons, we will be able to find some helpful answers to the failures in our life like making bad decisions and having to live in broken relationships.

The book teaches us what it takes for us to see the promises of God fulfilled in our life. The moment the children of Israel set foot on the land, it was a continuous battle. For every inch of the Promised Land, which they moved to gain control, possession had to be wrested from angry foes. The same applies to our Christian life. Every time we begin to seek God’s blessings, the forces of evil will arise to confront and rob us of the blessings. As we study the book, it is hoped that we will learn many

principles, which we can apply to our life.

Joshua chapter 1 falls naturally into three sections: 1) The Lord calls Joshua (1:1-9); 2) Joshua prepares Israel (1:10-15); and 3) The children of Two and One Half Tribes accept Joshua's leadership (1:16-18)

COMMENTARY

The Lord Calls Joshua –1:1-9

After the death of Moses, the man to succeed him was Joshua. It was not Joshua's choice although he had proven himself as Moses' closest faithful servant. For a long time, he had been faithfully learning the "ropes" from Moses. The children of Israel were without a leader now that the LORD had called Moses home.

The Lord God will now call Joshua to take over the leadership position, which was once held by Moses. The shoes Joshua has to fill were huge. Joshua was chosen to lead the great multitude of no less than two million into the land, which God promised to Israel's forefathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Joshua had already been called earlier by Moses. Moses had officially handed over his leadership to Joshua before the priest and the people of Israel. But this call of Joshua in Joshua 1 was different. Numbers 27:18-23 – *"And the LORD said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and*

lay thine hand upon him; And set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation; and give him a charge in their sight. And thou shalt put some of thine honour upon him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient. And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask counsel for him after the judgment of Urim before the LORD: at his word shall they go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he, and all the children of Israel with him, even all the congregation. And Moses did as the LORD commanded him: and he took Joshua, and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation: And he laid his hands upon him, and gave him a charge, as the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses."

The Lord spoke to him. The LORD had to call Him personally and Joshua needed this call from the LORD Himself. If he had been called by Moses and the priest and the people only, that was not good enough. They were still men. The servant of the LORD is a title that must be earned. It is not man who calls or the needs of the people that must prompt a person to serve the LORD. He must first and last remember that it is the LORD who calls. For in the ministry, the servant of God will face untold number of issues and problems and spiritual attacks. He needs to look to God and depend on Him alone to see Him through all the years of life ministry. To not lose sight

of this basic and crucial focus in his life, the call of the LORD is indispensable.

Notice that in verse 1 the LORD made it abundantly clear that Moses was called “the servant of the LORD” and Joshua was called “Moses’ minister.” The word for “minister” in Hebrew refers to someone who waits on his master. Joshua was Moses’ minister and cannot be called the servant of the LORD yet. It is a title that has to be earned. The first and only time in the book of Joshua that Joshua was called the servant of the LORD was in Joshua 24:29. It was the time when Joshua was said to die at the age of 110 years old. In other words, the message was loud and clear it took Joshua his whole life of obedience to God’s Word to earn the title “the servant of the LORD”!

The Lord said: “Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over ...” (v.2). The Lord commanded him to “arise, and go over this Jordan”. The mission was very clear. Cross the River Jordan and conquer the Promised Land. He must lead Israel across and into the Promised Land. The Land is a gift from the Lord.

The parameters of the Land were described by God to Joshua. Before that, God assured Joshua that every inch of land that the children of Israel were to tread on would be given to them, as He had spoken to Moses.

The boundaries marking the land of Lebanon to the great river Euphrates (present day Iraq), all the land of the Hittites, and to the great sea, were theirs to own (vv. 3, 4). The Hittites were the ethnic tribes who were the inhabitants of the land before Israel claimed it from the Lord. By today’s geography, the Promised Land (Cis-Jordan region excluding the portion already given to the two and one half tribes) stretches from west Syria and the Mediterranean Sea to the east of present day Iraq and Iran.

God did not have to defend Himself in giving “all the land of the Hittites” to Israel. As far as God is concerned, He owns every inch of land on the whole planet. He gives land to every nation as He pleases. This truth concerning God’s ownership of the world as Creator must be inscribed in the tablets of men’s mind and heart.

God further guaranteed Joshua success in this assignment. God promised he would be victorious against any opposition for He would be with him just as He was with Moses. God gave His Word that He would not fail or forsake him. This was a great encouragement and assurance to Joshua having witnessed the significance of the LORD’s presence in Moses’ ministry these past 40 long years. The LORD never failed His servant, Moses. Whenever there was death in the camp, it was ALWAYS because of Israel’s sins. The LORD will not fail.

He will be ever faithful to ALL He promised!

Coupled with this assurance from God, man must still do his part. This is a clear teaching of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. Joshua cannot sit back and do nothing. Firstly, he must "be strong and of a good courage" in doing this task which would end in dividing the land distributing each portion to the children of Israel (v.6). The victory is assured. It is not a question "if" Joshua will succeed but "when" will Joshua conquer and divide the Land. Secondly, God told him he should be strong and **very** courageous to do according to God's Word, which He had given to Moses. It appears that the first is easier to do than the second. The addition of the word "very" to the same phrase is significant. The faith to trust the LORD that Joshua will conquer and divide the Land is easier to obey than the obedience of all of God's Word. Why is that so?

He must faithfully observe to do all the things, which are written in "this book of the law" (the five books written by Moses). He must never under any circumstance deviate from it, if he were to expect success in claiming every place in the land. He was to speak out the Word of God, and to meditate upon it day and night in order to discern and know the mind and heart of God and to obey Him.

God promised that when he followed this way, he would be successful and prosperous in all that he did. Once again, God called on him to "be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed." This was the third time God encouraged him to be strong. God knew that the work ahead was not easy. But God had promised him success if he diligently observed what God had prescribed to him in His Word. God's work must be done in God's way and there is no other way! Man cannot improve on what God has written in His Word. What God expects is that those who serve Him must be very courageous and faithful in doing His will!

Joshua Prepares Israel – 1:10-15

Joshua wasted no time in preparing the people to cross Jordan and claim the land, which God had promised to give to them. He willingly assumed leadership of the people. He gave specific instructions to the officers of the people to prepare for the crossing over to the Promised Land. They were to organize the preparation of provisions for three days after which they would cross the river Jordan to possess the land, which the Lord had given them. Manna was still available on a daily basis, but they had a hundred and one things to pack and be ready to cross the river.

It might seem superfluous to mention the enormous task of

mobilizing no less than two million people of all ages with all their earthly possessions, and not to mention, the boards and pillars of the Tabernacle, the Ark of Covenant, the Lamp-stand and the Table of Bread, and other utensils relating to the Tabernacle! Next, Joshua reminded the tribes of Reuben, Gad and half of the tribe of Manasseh what they had promised Moses. In return for their request to settle on the Land east of Jordan (Trans-Jordan) with all their families and livestock, they promised to accompany their fellow brethren across the Jordan into the Land armed and ready for battle. These fighting men were called “mighty men of valour” by Joshua (vv.13, 14). This was an exercise of faith on their part. With all the men of valour across the River Jordan, they trusted the LORD to protect their women and children and old men and live stock.

They were to join the remaining nine and a half tribes until they had completely conquered and were in possession of the Promised Land. All the children of Israel must be ready by the third day. Joshua showed four essential qualities of leadership: keeping in tune with God; willing to make tough decisions, able to delegate responsibility; and having a plan of action. The task requires both spiritual and physical preparations. There must not be any compromise in any of these two essentials.

The Children of Two and One Half Tribes Accept Joshua’s Leadership – 1:16-18

All the children of the two and one half tribes expressed their acceptance of Joshua’s leadership and promised to obey and cooperate with him. Whatever he commanded them to do, they would obey and wherever he sent them, they would also go. They further gave their assurance that just as they had hearkened unto Moses in all things, so they would hearken unto Joshua. They gave only one condition and that was that the LORD their God was with Joshua, as He was with Moses. They also gave an undertaking that whoever among them were to rebel against Joshua or disobey his commandment, they would impose the death penalty on such a person. The word for “rebel” (Hebrew, transliteration: *marah*) means “to be disobedient towards; to be contentious, rebellious.” It is also a word used often for disobedience to God. They too encouraged Joshua to be strong (steadfast) and courageous. This expression of willingness to surrender their personal and vested interests to carry out the will of God is most commendable. They knew they were doing the will of God. They loved God more than their families.

PRACTICAL VALUE

Every leader in the church must be called by the LORD before they can serve. If they are called by man, they will become servants of men and will become men pleasers. On the other hand, if they are called by God they will be courageous to preach and teach the whole counsel of God and not be afraid of man. They will be just and righteous in all their dealings.

A church must be willing to accept and submit to their own Pastor, Elders and Deacons. These are the LORD's appointed leaders and due respect and obedience must be accorded to them if the church is to make a beneficial impact within and without the church. Likewise, similar conditions must apply to all the leaders of the church in that the Word of God must come forth from their mouth and they must not turn to the right or left of God's perfect Word.

In other words, they must lead in accordance with the Word of God. They must not lead the church in their own ways. It is a true saying that work of God must be done in God's way. If they seek to do things not in accordance with God's Word, the work will not have God's blessings and success. The strong injunction for the leaders to "be strong and of a good courage applies aptly to all Christians especially pastors, elders and deacons of the church or anyone who takes the lead in one way or another.

We observe the following ingredients to a productive and prosperous church: a godly and strong leadership; members are willing to put aside personal interests and accept the leadership of the church; and adopt a united mind and purpose to cooperate with one another for the glory of Jesus Christ in all we do and say. Ask ourselves: Does our church exhibit these qualities? May we all submit to the will of God and willingly prepare ourselves to do His will for His praise and glory. AMEN

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

MONDAY: Joshua 1:1-4; Genesis 12:1-3; 17:3-8.

TUESDAY: Joshua 1:5-9; Deuteronomy 31:7-8.

WEDNESDAY: Joshua 1:10-15; Numbers 32:16-32.

THURSDAY: Joshua 1:16-18; 1 Timothy 5:17-22.

FRIDAY: Joshua 1:1-18; Hebrews 11:1-6; James 2:17-26.

Discussion Questions

1. When do we call a person a servant of the Lord today? Or should we do so? Is it acceptable to do so?

2. The addition of the word “very” to the same phrase “be strong and of a good courage” (verses 6 and 7) is significant. The faith to trust the LORD that Joshua will conquer and divide the Land is easier to obey than the obedience of all of God’s Word. Why is that so?

3. Why is it important for the believer to speak forth God’s Word in all his ways? What about the leaders of God’s people today?

4. What do you think could happen if the two and one half tribes had not agreed to go with the nine and one half tribes to conquer the rest of the Promised Land?

5. What is the most needed quality in a godly leader as seen from Joshua 1?

6. What can we learn from this chapter in our relationship with our leaders?

7. What knowledge of God have we learned in *Joshua*?
