

Let's Worship God

13th-18th November 2017

Joshua

The Book of Joshua

THE PROMISED LAND

BOWNE

The Book of Joshua

THE PROMISED LAND

Monday -Joshua 1:1-4 - The Certainty of the LORD's Promises

We are going to be looking at the book of Joshua using notes written by Rev. Peter Loughridge. The first theme the writer underlines is the certainty of God's promises. The dimensions of the land God promises (v4) are astonishing! However, more important than the size of the land is the fact that these words to Joshua are a continuation of the promises God made to Abraham and his descendants way back in Genesis. Look up Genesis 12:6,7; 13:14,15; 17:8 for example. The ancient promise is about to be fulfilled.

Notice also the significance of the timing of God's promise to Joshua. After the death of Moses ... (v1). Moses was an incomparable figure in the history of Israel. He had led them out of Egypt and through the wilderness. He had pleaded with God on Israel's behalf when He had threatened to destroy them (Ex. 32-34). Moses was the one who had been given the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20) and who received direct revelation from God (Num. 12:1-8). There was no-one like Moses (Deut. 34:10-12). But now Moses had died. You can imagine the dismay in Israel. They had expected it and were prepared for it (Deut. 31), but what do you do when the servant of God dies and there is a raging river between you and the land you are to inherit?

It is against this background of the death of 'Moses the Incomparable' that the writer sets the LORD's promise. What does God say? 'Moses my servant is dead, so you must wait'? No. 'You must weep'? No. Arise, go over ... into the land ... (v2). Moses may die; God's promise lives on. There is the passing of an era but the endurance of the promise. The faithfulness of the LORD does not hinge on the achievements of men, however gifted they may be, nor does it evaporate in the face of funerals and obstacles.

Questions

1. Why would the Lord's words about the land have been an encouragement?
2. What is Joshua's response to be to the news of Moses' death?

Prayer Points

1. Give thanks that God always keeps His promises.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

“Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” Joshua 1:9b

Praise: Psalm 96C:1-6 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

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Tuesday - Joshua 1:5-9 - The Encouragement of the LORD's Presence

Read v5 and v9 again. God says to Joshua: I will be with you. It is interesting to notice that God spoke these simple words previously to a reluctant, backward, excuse-making, pick-someone-else sort of guy - Moses, in Exodus 3:12, when he was called to face Pharaoh! The same God now gives the same reassurance in similar threatening circumstances to Joshua. In fact, the special covenant name that Israel used for God - YHWH (or 'LORD' in capitals in our Bibles) - was a constant reminder to them of God promising 'I will be with you' (see Ex. 3:12-15). So even though Moses was dead, the LORD had not changed. He was still YHWH, the God who is present with His servant and His people to help and deliver.

It is because of His presence with Joshua that God can exhort him three times to be strong and courageous (v6, 7, 9). Joshua is not told to grit his teeth and muster up his own courage. God is not saying that He prefers leaders who display positive thinking. Joshua can only be strong because the LORD is with him.

We might be tempted to read these words and think it's all very nice for Joshua - he was an important character; it was his job to lead all Israel. What about an ordinary Christian like me? Is this promise for me? Hebrews 13:5,6 applies this same promise to a Christian congregation. The promise of God's abiding presence in Joshua 1 is also for you. It is the solution to the sin of covetousness and discontent and it leads to the freedom of a life without fear. There is nothing more essential for the people of God than to hear their God repeating to them amid all their changing circumstances: I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you (v5).

Questions

1. Why should Joshua be strong and courageous?
2. How should these verses make us feel?

Prayer Points

1. Give thanks that God is with you.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

“Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” Joshua 1:9b

Praise: Psalm 96C:7-12 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

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Wednesday - Joshua 1:5-9 - The Centrality of the LORD's Word

These verses also show us the importance of God's Word. Joshua is commanded to be especially strong and courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that my servant Moses commanded you (v7). God then clarifies how Joshua can achieve such obedience: This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it (v8). Constant, careful absorbing of the Word of God leads to obedience to it. Lack of study results in lack of obedience.

This command is given specifically to Joshua as the leader of God's people. Does the command apply to every Israelite? Does it apply to every Christian? Yes. If we don't like Joshua 1:7-8, we still have to face Psalm 1:2 - which tells us that every godly believer should delight in the law of the LORD and meditate on it day and night. There is no escape! Life in the kingdom of God should be lived out of the Word of God. Joshua 1 and Psalm 1 both tell us that a life pleasing to God does not arise from mystical experiences or warm feelings or the latest gimmick promoted in a Christian best-seller. No, a life pleasing to God comes from the Word He has already spoken. It comes from careful, diligent, frequent consumption of that Word. It comes from the resulting obedience to that Word.

Joshua is promised success and prosperity in doing this important work for God if he keeps God's Word central in all he does. Unless he makes it his first priority to meditate upon and obey God's law, his leadership will fail.

Questions

1. What is to be the first priority for Joshua as leader?
2. What was Joshua's attitude towards God's Word to be (v8)?

Prayer Points

1. Pray that you would love God's Word more and more.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." Joshua 1:9b

Praise: Psalm 97:all - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

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Thursday - Joshua 1:10-18 - The Unity of the LORD's People

The significance of these verses is seen by looking back at Numbers 32. There the tribes mentioned in Joshua 1:12 had asked Moses to assign them land on that side (east) of the River Jordan, which was the opposite side from the region all the people were about to enter into. Moses suspected their motivation and rebuked them as sinful men (Num. 32:14) - apparently content to go ahead and possess their own land, then sit out the conquest and allow the other tribes to fend for themselves, leaving the majority of God's people disheartened and discouraged (Num. 32:7). Moses compared it to the rebellion at Kadesh-barnea (Num. 13-14) when the people had become afraid of entering Canaan.

It is in light of this threat of rebellion against the LORD that the unity of God's people becomes so essential. In Joshua 1:12ff, the same tribes are models of willing obedience and instruments of encouragement. Indifference from them or failure to cross over and fight with the rest of Israel would have discouraged and disheartened the rest and could have led again to rebellion and unbelief.

We should see the implications for the church. Unity among God's people is no idle luxury. This does not mean that we have to feel all sticky and gooey about each other, but it does mean that we must care enough that we don't want any of the Lord's children to get discouraged. It seems that such caring encouragement should take place in our public meetings (1 Sam. 23:16; Heb. 10:25). And it is crucial because, ultimately, unity is a necessity for faithfulness. Joshua's command to the two-and-a-half tribes and their loyal promise provides an example of the importance of the unity of God's people and their support of His chosen leadership, as well as a sober note on the seriousness of any division.

Questions

1. Why did Joshua address three tribes specifically?
2. What do these verses teach us about the significance of unity?

Prayer Points

1. Pray that you would be an encouragement to other Christians.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

“Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” Joshua 1:9b

Praise: Psalm 98A:all - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

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Friday - Joshua 2:1-7 - Protection of the Spies

Joshua 2 is constructed in such a way that our attention is supposed to be drawn to Rahab's confession of faith in tomorrow's passage (v8-14). The writer repeats certain key points in this opening section for emphasis: the spies had come to search out the land (v2,3); Rahab hid the men (v4,6); Rahab claimed not to know anything about them (v4,5); and the gate of the city of Jericho was now shut (v5,7). The writer is building up the suspense and leaves the reader with a 'cliffhanger' at the end of v7! We should be thinking: 'How will they ever get out if the gates have been shut?' But that question is not answered until v15 - after Rahab's confession of faith. The writer is indicating that what Rahab is about to say is so important that all other matters must be placed on the back burner for now!

Endless debates and discussions have centred on v4-6 and whether or not it was right for Rahab to lie to the Jericho police! Bible commentator Dale Ralph Davis says: "It is tragic when people snag their pants on the nail of Rahab's lie, quibble endlessly about the matter, and never get around to hearing Rahab's truth (v8-13)", which the writer has plotted to make the centre of the whole story. The New Testament doesn't fall into this trap. It consistently stresses the faith of Rahab (Heb. 11:31; Jam. 2:25). This does not mean that the Biblical writer necessarily approves of Rahab's lie or that he authorises us to go and do likewise. He neither approves nor disapproves of Rahab's lie; rather, he ignores it (that is, the ethics of what Rahab did). Of course, Bible readers must always be careful to distinguish between what the Bible reports and what it recommends, between what it records and what it requires. The Bible reports that Jacob had four wives; it is hardly encouraging us to do the same.

Questions

1. What does the situation look like for the spies at the end of v7?
2. What characteristic of Rahab is emphasised in Scriptures record of her?

Prayer Points

1. Pray for Christians being persecuted in other countries.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." Joshua 1:9b

Praise: Psalm 98B:all - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

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Saturday - Joshua 2:8-14 - Rahab's Confession of Faith

The content of Rahab's confession justifies its central place in the story. She reviews the might of the LORD (v10). This was the basis of faith - she had heard about the mighty acts of God. This is the normal way of coming to faith. Biblical faith is based on at least some knowledge and evidence. Even couples who 'fall' in love don't come to love each other merely by sighing or oohing and ahing; rather they talk, communicate, find out about each other - their past, their likes/dislikes, their character, etc. Even romance has some basis in knowledge. So is the case with faith. Faith is not just a warm, cosy feeling about God. Faith grows, if at all, out of hearing what God has done for His people.

Then Rahab confesses the majesty of the LORD (v11). That is the conviction of faith. Her words echo what was supposed to be Israel's conclusion about their God (see Deut. 4:39). But here is a pagan, Canaanite prostitute with an 'Israelite' confession on her lips. She believes in the utter supremacy of the LORD. She assumes that He is the only God functioning in heaven and upon the earth.

All of this leads Rahab to seek the mercy of the LORD (v12,13). Here is the evidence of faith. Genuine faith never rests content with being convinced of the reality of God but presses on to take refuge in God. Rahab not only must know the clear truth about God but also must escape the coming wrath of God. It isn't just a matter of correct belief but of desperate need. Saving faith is always like this. It never stops with brooding over the nature or activity of God but always runs to take refuge under His wings. Amazingly, Rahab not only trembles before the terror of the Lord but also senses that there might be mercy in this fearful God. What else but the touch of the LORD's hand could have created such faith in the heart of the pagan prostitute?

Questions

1. What fact is Rahab's faith rooted in?
2. What action does her knowledge and her faith lead to?

Prayer Points

1. Pray for the preaching and hearing of God's Word tomorrow.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

“Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” Joshua 1:9b

Praise: Psalm 99A:all - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

The goal of Let's Worship God is to encourage and help you in your worship of God each day.

**God tells us that
Ezra read from
the book of the Law
day after day
and that
the people of God
were filled with joy!**

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