

Let's Worship God

18th-23rd December 2017

Joshua

The Book of Joshua

THE PROMISED LAND

BOWING

The Book of Joshua

THE PROMISED LAND

Monday -Joshua 9:16-27 - The Concern over the Honour of God

This chapter shows Israel's concern for the honour of God. They soon discover that the Gibeonites actually lived nearby and that they had been tricked into their oath. The whole problem centres on this oath they had sworn. The people probably thought that an oath based on Gibeon's deception did not need to be honoured. However, the view of the leaders of the people seemed to be that breaking the oath would bring the LORD's anger on Israel again; to break the oath would dishonour the LORD's name before the other nations. They had sworn by "the LORD, the God of Israel" (v19) and so breaking their oath would suggest that LORD could not be trusted. Their solution was to make the Gibeonites wood-cutters and water-carriers for the LORD's house (v21, 23).

Naturally, many of us as Christians probably find it hard to understand why Israel sticks to their oath. That's because so many of us can have such a low view of 'giving our word to someone', and we can have such a flimsy concern for the truth. Israel was stuck. They must not break an oath, despite the fact that it had been deceitfully obtained. They were only in this mess because they had neglected God's wisdom. What were they to do? Live as faithfully as they could within that twisted situation. Sometimes God's people are called to live obediently amidst the results of their folly. There are times when our preferences or our convenience must not sidestep difficult circumstances like these. Like Israel, we may be caught in a framework of our sin, wrong and foolishness. Certainly there can be repentance and forgiveness - but erasing the guilt of sin doesn't erase all the consequences of sin. So we must be faithful to God even in the aftermath of our mistakes and be assured that His mercy does not cease because we have been wrong. His grace shines through even in our messes.

Questions

1. Why was it so important to the leaders of Israel that they kept this oath?
2. What does this teach us about the importance of our word?

Prayer Points

1. Pray that we would take keeping our word seriously.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

There has been no day like it before or since, when the LORD heeded the voice of a man, for the LORD fought for Israel. Joshua 10:14

Praise: Psalm 106:1-6 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

The Book of Joshua

THE PROMISED LAND

Tuesday - Joshua 10:1-11 - The Warrior of Israel

Israel had taken Jericho and Ai in the east of the Promised Land. They were now also at peace with the Gibeonites, who made up a confederation of four cities (9:17) in the centre and west. Israel had control of the strategic central section of the land. They had sliced through the middle of Canaan, driving a wedge between north and south.

Adoni-zedek, king of Jerusalem, was fearful, so he gathered support from four other kings to take on Gibeon - Israel's new allies. The Gibeonites sent to Joshua for help (v6). Joshua and his troops pursued the five kings (v7-9). Yet we see that it is the LORD who is Israel's Warrior.

V10 says: "The LORD threw them into a panic before Israel". Probably the best translation of v10 is that the LORD is the One doing all the action here - striking Israel's enemies with a great blow, chasing them and striking them. It may sound strange to us to hear of the LORD pursuing the enemy, but that is exactly the point. We are to see in this passage that the LORD is the fighter; He is the warrior; He is the victor who crushes the enemy. V11 says "the LORD threw down large stones from heaven", which killed more opponents than Israel's swords.

Much of the church has lost this vision of Christ as the warrior who fights for His people. For too many of us, it doesn't fit our sentimental man-made 'idol' of what God should be like. It seems too violent. Jesus is portrayed not only as kind and tender but soft and a pushover. Psalm 24:8 asks "Who is this King of Glory?" and the answer comes "The LORD, strong and mighty, the LORD, mighty in battle!" Revelation 19:11-16 says about Jesus: "In righteousness he judges and makes war". No mild God or soft Jesus can give His people hope. It is only as we know the Warrior of Israel who fights for us that we can have hope of triumphing.

Questions

1. How is God portrayed in these verses?
2. How can this fact help you today?

Prayer Points

1. Give thanks that Christ fights for us.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

There has been no day like it before or since, when the LORD heeded the voice of a man, for the LORD fought for Israel. Joshua 10:14

Praise: Psalm 106:7-12 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

The Book of Joshua

THE PROMISED LAND

Wednesday - Joshua 10:12-15 - The Miracle of Prayer

These verses record one of the most remarkable miracles in Scripture! In response to Joshua's prayer (v12), the sun stopped (v13). There is a lot of discussion among Bible experts about whether this meant that the daylight was extended or the darkness was extended, but we must be very careful not to miss the main point. V14 takes care to return our attention to what should be our focus as we look at these verses: "There has been no day like it before or since, when the LORD obeyed the voice of a man".

The word translated as "obeyed" in v14 simply means that 'the LORD heard the voice of a man' (more recent revisions of the ESV say 'the LORD heeded'; other versions say 'the LORD hearkened' or 'listened to the voice of a man'). This is the miracle of prayer! The passage tells us that this is more astonishing than the sun and moon standing still - that God should listen to us! That day was amazing not because of some unusual daylight or darkness but because the LORD heard the prayer of a man!

V12 reinforces that this incident is more about prayer than it is about the activities of the sun and moon: "At that time Joshua spoke to the LORD ... and he said in the sight of all Israel ..." This was not a private prayer from Joshua. It was said in the sight of all Israel so that they all would see and learn the wonder of prayer. "The LORD listened to the voice of a man" (v14 - NASB). Astounding! Isn't it still amazing that God listens to the voice of a man or woman who comes to Him? This view of prayer should rebuke any possibility of us being too casual in our praying or finding prayer boring. The Great King who sits on high stoops down and bends his ear to the lips of those who are dust and ashes (Ps. 113:5-9). He says: "When he calls to me, I will answer him" (Ps. 91:15).

Questions

1. What does this incident teach us about the privilege of prayer?
2. How should this affect your praying?

Prayer Points

1. Give thanks for the privilege we have of prayer.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

There has been no day like it before or since, when the LORD heeded the voice of a man, for the LORD fought for Israel. Joshua 10:14

Praise: Psalm 106:13-18- See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

The Book of Joshua

THE PROMISED LAND

Thursday - Joshua 10:16-43 - The Sign of Victory

Verse 24 tells us: "Joshua summoned all the men of Israel and said to the chiefs of the men of war who had gone with him, 'Come near; put your feet on the necks of these kings.' Then they came near and put their feet on their necks".

This was not cruel mistreatment of prisoners-of-war or macho showing-off by Israel. It was a sign. As v25 explains, it was an acted parable or a reassuring visual aid of how the LORD would certainly place all their enemies beneath them. The symbolic action was intended as a visible encouragement of the people of God.

God gives His people signs like this to encourage their faith in Him. Noah saw God's bow in the clouds and was reassured of His promise (Gen. 9:11-17). Abram looked at the hosts of stars and was similarly encouraged to believe God's promise to him (Gen. 15:1-6). God has given us the sacraments (baptism and communion) as visible signs that will strengthen our weak faith. They warmly encourage us that God's Word is reliable and His promise is sure. Just as dirty Israelite feet on royal Canaanite necks gave fresh encouragement that this is what the LORD would do to all their enemies, so the simple action of eating bread and drinking wine assures us that the crucified and risen Christ will sustain us now and always.

Verses 29-43 give us some more detail of Israel's southern campaign, as they worked their way down from the central section of Canaan they'd initially taken (see Tuesday's notes). Taking possession of this land is no small achievement. Yet once again we see it repeatedly emphasised that this is the work of the LORD (look at v30, 32, 42).

Questions

1. Why did Joshua give such an apparently strange command in v24?
2. Can you think of other examples in the Bible where God gave His people visible signs of encouragement?

Prayer Points

1. Give thanks for the encouragement God gives us.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

There has been no day like it before or since, when the LORD heeded the voice of a man, for the LORD fought for Israel. Joshua 10:14

Praise: Psalm 106:19-24 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

The Book of Joshua

THE PROMISED LAND

Friday - Joshua 11:1-9 - Some trust in chariots and horses, but ...

Now the action moves to the north of the Promised Land. A group of northern rulers unite in a coalition to try to stop Israel. Verses 1-5 detail the precise kings, locations and ethnic groups opposing Israel. The names and specifics might seem confusing to us, but the purpose is for us to feel how overwhelming the enemy is. As we read line after line, we are to sense the almost hopeless situation Israel faces. The massive resources of the enemies of God are further spelled out in terms of their numerical and technological advantage (v4).

Verses 6 and 7 illustrate the balance between God's sovereign control and our responsibility. Joshua firmly believed God's promise that He'd give their enemies over to them (v6). So he and his warriors went on the attack (v7)! He believed God, so he did something about it! Time and time again in the Bible, true faith results in action. Joshua was so full of faith in God's promise that he rushed the imposing enemy camp!

Verses 6 and 9 teach an important lesson. The enemies' chariots were burned and their horses were hamstrung (that is, the large tendon at the back of the legs was cut - leaving them of no military use). This isn't because the Israelites wouldn't have known how to use them. God was teaching them not to depend on any such mode of strength or assistance, but to rely on Him alone. Psalm 20:7 says: "Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God". By destroying these methods of normal human security, God was teaching them to look to the only One who could keep them (Ps. 121). Human machinery or methods are no substitute for God's help. Sometimes God has to deny us some of our favourite 'props' to remind us of that.

Questions

1. Why did Israel not keep the horses and chariots and use them for their own military campaign?
2. What might be the 'horses and chariots' in your life that you put hope and confidence in?

Prayer Points

1. Pray that we would put our hope and trust in God alone.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

There has been no day like it before or since, when the LORD heeded the voice of a man, for the LORD fought for Israel. Joshua 10:14

Praise: Psalm 106:25-30 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

The Book of Joshua

THE PROMISED LAND

Saturday - Joshua 11:10-15 - The Model of God's Servant

Joshua seems to be presented in these verses as the model of God's servant. This is hinted at in v12, but v15 is emphatic: "Just as the LORD had commanded Moses his servant, so Moses commanded Joshua, and so Joshua did. He left nothing undone of all that the LORD had commanded Moses". You can look up some of the commands that are referred to in Ex. 34:11-16; Num. 33:51-54; and Deut. 20:16-18.

Obedience in this case was not easy. It meant destroying or removing the native population of Canaan. As we've considered before in this book, this seems unnecessarily vicious - but that simply highlights how little we understand of the contagious spiritual cancer that was widespread throughout Canaan. We arrogantly pride ourselves on being kinder than God, but all we prove is that we haven't a clue what holiness is.

Verse 15 seems to be saying: 'Here is a model of God's servant. His chief characteristic is that he obeys God's commands'. It doesn't sound very exciting, but it is a much needed witness to Israel (present and future) and to us about what really matters - especially in a leader, but in any Christian. It is far too easy to get caught up in the tide of 'other ways' of measuring which is a good church, a good leader or a good Christian. Too often it is more glossy criteria like numbers, appearance, gifts, size or many other things that we look at. This passage says: 'Here's a model leader and follower of God. He obeys God's commands'. Jesus Christ, THE servant of God, had no other standard: "I always do the things that are pleasing to him" (John 8:29). 1 John 2:3 cuts through all the froth: "And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments".

Questions

1. What characteristics about Joshua have stood out for you so far in the first half of the book?
2. For all these gifts and qualities, what characteristic do these verses show that really mattered?

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

There has been no day like it before or since, when the LORD heeded the voice of a man, for the LORD fought for Israel. Joshua 10:14

Praise: Psalm 106:31-36 - 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!**

Let's Worship God is produced for the RP Global Alliance
by Airdrie Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

If you have any queries please contact - admin@rpglobalalliance.org