

Let's Worship God

1st-6th January 2018

Joshua

The Book of Joshua

THE PROMISED LAND



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Monday -Joshua 14:10-14 – The Energy of Faith

Caleb displays his energetic faith, despite being 85! Why such vigour and expectancy in this senior citizen of Israel? V12 suggests two facts that shot the adrenalin into Caleb's faith. One was the extreme difficulty of the task. It's as if Caleb says to Joshua: 'Remember the sneers you and I heard that day the other ten spies brought their report? Remember all the whimpering about large, fortified cities and large, terrifying Anakim? Well, that's exactly why I want this hill country for my inheritance – there are fortified cities and real, live Anakim'. Precisely what caused Israel to shrink from this task in Numbers 13 gave Caleb the passion to take on the task. An American shoe company once sent a salesman to a foreign country. He had barely landed when he contacted home and asked to return. 'No-one over here wears shoes', he said. The company brought him back and sent another salesman. Soon he too contacted home: 'Send me all the shoes you've got. No-one here has shoes!' Similarly, the sheer difficulty of the task stimulated Caleb's request. He believed where the rest of Israel had failed to believe – and he wanted a chance to show what God could do!

The other factor was the unguessable favour of the LORD. Caleb's "it may be" is not the voice of doubt but of expectancy. By saying "just as the LORD said", Caleb showed that he knew the outcome was certain. His "it may be" preserves God's freedom. Caleb doesn't view God as his 'message boy' following his orders, but as the free and sovereign Lord who does whatever He pleases. But because of the LORD's promises Caleb suspected He would be pleased to drive out the enemy before him. Caleb was confident but not cocky. Biblical faith always keeps this balance: it doesn't dictate to God or try to write His script; yet it also doesn't doubt God when it can cling to a clear promise about something.

Questions

1. What factors fuelled the spiritual energy of this 85 year old?
2. Do big spiritual challenges spur you on or make you shrink back?

Prayer Points

1. Pray that we would believe God's promises.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"It may be that the LORD will be with me, and I shall drive them out just as the LORD said." Joshua 14:12b

Praise: Psalm 108:1-6 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

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Tuesday - Joshua 15:1-19 – The Nitty Gritty Details of God’s Faithfulness

The lists and lists of place names in these verses (and in this chapter; and the surrounding chapters) could seem tedious. We need to keep reminding ourselves that “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable ...” Maybe we need a change of perspective on these chapters. They are not just lists of places. They are the finer details of God’s glorious promise. Joshua 15 is one of the buds on the tree of Genesis 12 and Genesis 15. Here we see the very real fulfilment – literally, the exact places and boundaries – of God’s promise of land to Abraham and his offspring (look up Gen. 12:6, 7 and 15:7-21). These chapters describe in detail God’s gift of the land and that means that every town name and border point throbs with excitement! No close-up description of God’s gifts could ever be boring!

It’s the same in our lives: the nitty gritty details of God’s faithfulness are never boring. When you poured your cereal this morning, it was another fulfilment of Matt. 6:25, 26. When you leave your bin out for collection – even having rubbish is a sign of God’s provision. Those you share your home with – they are the fulfilment of God’s promises (e.g. Prov. 19:14; Ps. 127:3-5). Not one of these details staggers our imagination, but like the boundaries and towns of Judah they are visible signs of God’s faithfulness. Hardly boring!

Verses 13-19 take us back to Caleb, briefly. He not only talked faith but acted in faith – and the LORD granted him success. We already know Caleb’s planned conquest would be no small task and the difficulty seems to be emphasised by the special incentive offered (v16, 17). It was certainly a fearful assignment. The Anakim seemed invincible in Israelite minds; but v13-19 show them being defeated. The God who promised the inheritance enabled Caleb’s clan to obtain it, when they were willing to risk obedience.

Questions

1. What is the importance of a passage like this?
2. What are some of the seemingly more mundane aspects of God’s faithfulness that you see daily?

Prayer Points

1. Give thanks for some specific things God has given you today.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

“It may be that the LORD will be with me, and I shall drive them out just as the LORD said.” Joshua 14:12b

Praise: Psalm 108:7-11 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

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Wednesday - Joshua 15:20-63 – God’s Realism

The book of Joshua is no mere secular history book. The author is writing as God’s messenger with a word to the worshipping community of Israel. The question for us is: how do lists like this proclaim God and inspire our worship? How can worshippers be nurtured by this?

The solution may be to recognise the realism of God and the Bible. God’s Word is rarely about some bare, purely spiritual, abstract thought. The God of the Bible tends to be concrete. His gifts are often (though not always) touchable and visible. The inheritance God gives His people here in Joshua is not an idea but boundaries; not thoughts but towns; REAL real estate!

The LORD, the God of the Bible, has always been this way. His coming in the flesh is the great witness to that fact. John 1:14 – “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth”. Sometimes we can almost be too spiritual in our thinking about God and His gifts and His blessings. Maybe we need to rediscover the earthiness of God. Though His greatest blessings are ultimately spiritual, He often delights to bless in real, visible, physical ways also. Even when we come to enjoy eternal blessing in heaven, it will not be as a floating soul in some kind of spiritual neverland – we will walk around with a resurrection body in new heavens and a new earth (scan through Rev. 21 and 22).

So perhaps we can say that Israel’s concrete and visible inheritance in Canaan is a foreshadowing of our inheritance as believers. Our full possession is in the new heavens and the new earth, not in some earthless, fleshless void. The New Testament always lifts our eyes and fixes our minds upon the fullness of our hope – the redemption of our bodies on resurrection day at the return of our Lord (see Rom. 8:23; Phil. 3:20, 21).

Questions

1. What do lists like this teach us about God and His blessings to us?
2. What does it teach us about our inheritance?

Prayer Points

1. Give thanks for our inheritance in heaven.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

“It may be that the LORD will be with me, and I shall drive them out just as the LORD said.” Joshua 14:12b

Praise: Psalm 109:1-6 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

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Thursday - Joshua 16:1-17:2 – A Reminder of the LORD’s Ways

This passage refers to the sons of Joseph. V4 lists them as “Manasseh and Ephraim”. This was the order of their birth – Manasseh was the older of Joseph’s sons. However, the writer goes on to describe Ephraim’s territory before Manasseh’s allocation. He subtly calls attention to God’s sovereign arrangement which had given Ephraim the priority.

Back in Genesis 48, when Jacob was ill and close to death, his son Joseph brought his own two sons – Manasseh and Ephraim – to Jacob. But when Jacob first referred to them, he vowed: “Ephraim and Manasseh shall be mine, as Reuben and Simeon are” (Gen. 48:5). It’s a subtle switch, but deliberate. When Joseph presented the lads for Jacob’s blessing, he placed Manasseh – the older – opposite Jacob’s right hand and Ephraim opposite Jacob’s left (Gen. 48:13). However Jacob crossed his arms and placed his right hand on Ephraim, giving the younger son priority! Joseph tried to untangle it all but Jacob assured him (Gen. 48:19) that he knew what he was doing: “So he blessed them that day, saying, ‘By you Israel will pronounce blessings, saying, ‘God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh’”. Thus he put Ephraim before Manasseh” (Gen. 48:20).

This, then, is what Joshua 16-17 does too. The writer knows their order of birth (16:4) but he puts Ephraim (16:5-10) before Manasseh (17:1-13). It’s not obvious, but it’s another hint of the LORD’s strange ways. So often, God’s way reverses the expectations of men. So often, God’s way overthrows the human system of what is supposed to be. God is never the prisoner of what fallen men or women consider to be ‘normal’. Again and again He turns human standards on their heads, causing us to wonder and cheer. Without a God who works in strange ways, most of us would have had no hope. “Has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith?” (James 2:5) Also read 1 Cor. 1:26-29.

Questions

- 1.What does the order of Ephraim and Manasseh in these chapters teach us about God’s way of dealing with us?
- 2.How can this encourage you today?

Prayer Points

1. Give thanks that God’s ways are not as our ways.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

“It may be that the LORD will be with me, and I shall drive them out just as the LORD said.” Joshua 14:12b

Praise: Psalm 109:7-12 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

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Friday - Joshua 17:3-6 – Pleading the LORD’s Promises

You should take a moment to read the background for this incident in Numbers 27:1-11 (and 36:1-12 if you’re really keen!) A man called Zelophehad, of the tribe of Manasseh, had died without any sons. His five daughters had appealed to Moses, asking that what would have been their father’s land inheritance would not be diverted to the nearest male relative – but instead that they be granted his inheritance, unusual as that seemed at the time. Moses sought the LORD, who decided in the daughters’ favour.

These women were so sure of Israel’s upcoming possession of the land that they were thinking ahead about the practicalities. At the time they brought their request (back in Numbers) the Israelites hadn’t even entered the land or conquered their enemies, but they presented their case as if the land already was Israel’s. In Joshua 17:4 they remind Joshua: “The LORD commanded Moses to give us an inheritance along with our brothers”. As with Caleb (ch. 14) there was a boldness to request what the LORD had already promised, a confidence to plead the LORD’s past word.

Many Christians lack the boldness, assurance and confidence to lay hold of God’s provisions. We can be like someone in a shop who gathers all they need but finds no-one at the counter. A sign says: ‘Ring bell for service’. Often we are hesitant to ring the bell for all sorts of foolish reasons: we don’t want to seem impatient or demanding or to interrupt the staff! We can hardly imagine that the shopkeeper provided the bell because he wants us to use it! This point is emphasised in the book of Hebrews. If Jesus, the Son of God, is our great and sympathetic High Priest at the right hand of God, what should we do? “Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may ... find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:16). If God has provided a throne of grace, let us by all means draw near! The daughters of Zelophehad teach us not to waver shyly about laying hold of God’s promised provisions.

Questions

1. What is significant about the timing of the daughters’ request in Numbers 27?
2. How should this affect our praying?

Prayer Points

1. Pray that you would come boldly to the Lord.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

“It may be that the LORD will be with me, and I shall drive them out just as the LORD said.” Joshua 14:12b

Praise: Psalm 109:13-18 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

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Saturday - Joshua 17:7-18 – Deviation, Discontent and Distrust

Israel allowed themselves to deviate from the LORD's conquest plan. This has already been hinted at: look back at 15:63 and 16:10. This plainly contradicted the LORD's clear directions. He had told Israel that the residents of Canaan "shall not dwell in your land, lest they make you sin against me" (Ex. 23:33). He had commanded Israel to "devote them to complete destruction ... and show no mercy to them" (Deut. 7:2). Spiritual emergency required violent holiness. The cancer of Baal worship would surely infect Israel unless the most radical surgery removed it (see Deut. 7:4).

Even though God had said that the conquest would be gradual, these 'failure announcements' in Joshua 15-17 reveal compromise on the part of the Israelites. Clearly Israel had become dominant in the allocated territories – they subjected the Canaanites to forced labour. They had the power to wipe them out as the LORD commanded but they chose to spare them for their own advantage. A ready supply of slaves seemed more appealing than obeying God's direction to destroy them.

Israel had done well in the initial onslaught. Now that each tribe had to complete the conquest by remaining faithful in the little-by-little work for the LORD, many failed. So often as Christians, we're better at the heroics than we are at the simple, obedient endurance. We're not as keen on being faithful in the small things as in the momentous challenges. True Christian faith is proved not so much by courage in a sudden crisis but by faithfulness in the small things and the daily plodding.

Ephraim and Manasseh complain about their portion. Joshua basically tells them to get on with it! 'Yes, you've only one allocation, but take the hill country too. Sure, they have chariots and they're strong, but you can dispossess them'. Their discontent grew from a distrust of the LORD's adequacy. They needed to remember who the LORD is!

Questions

1. What was wrong with some of the Canaanites being spared?
2. Why did Israel not destroy all the Canaanites?

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

"It may be that the LORD will be with me, and I shall drive them out just as the LORD said." Joshua 14:12b

Praise: Psalm 109:19-24 - 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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