

The Book of Joshua

Chapter 1

The Servant of the Lord

The Lord's Command

Joshua's Command

Reestablishment of the Deal with the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh

Theological Content

Theological Impact

The Servant of the Lord

Moses, the servant of the Lord, or a derivation of it is mentioned 18 times in this Book of Joshua. Throughout the book, Joshua is not called the servant of the Lord until he self-identifies himself as such in Joshua 5:14. The title is then given to him in Joshua 24:29 and repeated in Judges 2:8.

The phrase itself as a specific title is used 23 times. Most of them are an appellation for Moses in the Book of Joshua. Moses is the first to be called a servant of the Lord.

Moses (Deuteronomy 34:5); Joshua (Joshua 24:29); David (Psalm 36:1)

Moses continues to be recognized as the servant of the Lord in 2 Chronicles (1:3; 24:6), which ties him directly to the tabernacle and the Law of God. There are other places where *servant* is used, and others can be called servants of the Lord: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Caleb is called "My servant" in Numbers 14. Sampson refers to himself as "Your servant." Various prophets are called "My servant." Israel as a nation is referred to as "My servant(s)."

In regard to the servant of the Lord: The Hebrew Scriptures move from Moses to Joshua to David to the Messiah. The identification of the promised One is not referred to as the Servant of the Lord, but as the Servant, My Servant, (Isaiah's vision of this servant 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12). Jesus identifies Himself as the Servant in the Gospels, and Paul and Peter continue to use the Servant passages in Isaiah to speak of Jesus Christ.

The commonalities between the various persons known as "the Servant of the Lord" are that they are chosen by God (anointed), have leadership roles, and are prophets.

The Lord's Command

1. Joshua 1:2 – Arise, cross
 - a. Who – You and all this people
 - b. Where – Across the Jordan, to the land
 - c. Why – I am giving it to them

Arise is used to mean get up, establish, or stand, and is used in some contexts to mean attack (Joshua 24:9).

2. Be strong and courageous

- a. Who – 2nd Person Masculine Singular – To Joshua
- b. Why –
 - i. Literal - No man will be able to take a stand to your face (challenge)
 - ii. Just as I was (perfect tense) with Moses I will be (imperfect tense) with you
 - iii. I will not fail you or forsake you
 - iv. Literal – You will cause the people to inherit the land
- c. Repetition – Joshua 1:7, 9, 18 (stated by the people)
 - i. How can someone be strong?
 - ii. How can some be courageous?

When commanded to be *strong and courageous*, the command is not given without context. There are two contexts in the command: conquest of the land and keeping the Covenant, the Law.

Having strength and courage is based on the known ability of the person versus the known ability of the adversary. Simply telling someone to be strong and courageous without context or assurances is pointless. The reason that Joshua can be strong and courageous is based upon the encouragement and assurances of God:

1. Everything that Joshua has seen while being Moses' right hand
 2. Being filled with the spirit of wisdom
 3. Being commissioned by YHWH and Moses
- d. The command of being strong and courageous comes with direct how-to's
- i. Complete the conquest
 1. Do not give up
 2. Do it to the exact specifications (3-4)
 - ii. Keep the Law (himself and the leadership)
 1. Do according to all the Law
 2. Do not deviate
 3. Shall not depart from your mouth
 4. Meditate on it day and night
 5. Be careful to do according to all that is written
 6. Do not fear (YHWH Elohim is with you)

Joshua's Command

Time to act (1:10-11)

1. Enthusiasm
2. Preparation
3. Battle Array (Joshua 3)

Reestablishment of the Deal with the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh

Joshua continues giving orders in verse 12. Verses 10-11 seem to indicate that the 9½ tribes are preparing to cross the Jordan. In verse 12, the 2½ tribes (who have the land on the eastern bank of the Jordan as their inheritance) are to provide the allotment of troops that they pledged to Moses when he was still alive (Numbers 32). The civilian populations of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh were not asked to come along. These troops were obligated to go, but for how long? Verse 15 says, "...until the Lord gives your brothers rest...." These troops, who really had nothing personal to gain (they already had their land), had to fight alongside their brethren until all of the other tribes had conquered the regions assigned to them.

Here is one of the reasons that I conclude that the conquest of the land was successful. Joshua 22:1-4 – The brethren have achieved their rest and they are free to return home (40 years later).

The 2½ tribes restate their commitment –

1. Commitment to Joshua
2. Commitment to the Lord
3. "As long as you (Joshua) are strong and courageous we will with be with you"

Theological Impact for Israel

1. Rest – *rest* in Hebrew is "*nuach*" (this was used when the leaders of the 2½ tribes agreed to help their brethren obtain *rest* in their allotted territories. Up to now, the primary term associated with Israel was *inheritance*; they would inherit the land. But now we'll begin to see more and more use of the term *rest*, and we'll see it used as a focal point of being in the land, free from war, and having enjoyment in the remainder of the Hebrew Text (2 Samuel 7:1-17; 1 Chronicles 22:6-9; 2 Chronicles 14:6-7; 15:15; 20:30)
2. Israel was to learn that YHWH Elohim was a God who establishes, makes promises, gives reason to be strong and courageous, and His success is determined by the adherence to His Law, His system that He has set up.
3. God is one who chooses leadership. He chose Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and Joshua. The lesson continues into Judges where unsuspecting people and those unknown to the tribes were selected as judges. When 1st Samuel opens, the people reject God's selection of leaders through the prophets. They want a king and choose Saul for themselves.

4. Crossing the Jordan – We do not know what details Joshua knew at this time about crossing the Jordan, but he is one of two adults to have seen the crossing of the Red Sea. The Jordan must have seemed small in comparison.

Theological Impact to the Church

As readers of this content, we need to be careful about how we take this information. What does God desire for us? What does He want us to do? Can we claim any promises from Joshua?

1. Being a servant of God is something we should all strive for (dulos – in the NT), but no one should call himself “the servant of the Lord.”
2. Leadership is not selected the same way as it was then (even apostles).
3. Rest has a different concept (Hebrews 4).
4. Being strong and courageous is obviously an attribute that we should all strive for and there are plenty of verses to support the doctrine (Ephesians 6:1; 2 Timothy 1:7; 1 Peter 3:14). The reason that we have rest is not the reason that Joshua had it; the context determines.
5. He will never leave nor forsake – Hebrews 13:5. The promises of God to us are spiritual and eternal, not temporal and earthly.