

Be Strong and Courageous
(Joshua 1:1-9)
Expository Lessons from the Book of Joshua

I. Introduction to the Book of Joshua

- a. Despite teaching hundreds of Bible lessons over the past 10+ years, I recently realized that I have not yet taught some of my favorite parts of the Bible.
 - i. The book we are starting on today was at the top of the list of books I have been waiting to teach.
 - ii. I am especially interested in teaching books of the Bible where I feel that I can help the reader to understand things that might not be readily apparent. That includes:
 - 1. Important connections with other books of the Bible (including the New Testament),
 - 2. Faith-building foreshadowings of Christ,
 - 3. Valuable insights from early Christian writers, and
 - 4. Practical lessons for us.
- b. My approach in teaching this book is to maintain interest throughout the entire series:
 - i. Focus primarily on **chapters 1-10 and 23-24**.
 - ii. Move relatively quickly through the middle part of the book, **chapters 11-22**, which cover the conquest of different parts of Canaan.
- c. Let us first 'set the stage' for the opening of this book.
 - i. In **Genesis 15:12-20**, the Lord spoke to Abraham when he was in Canaan. He told Abraham that:
 - 1. Although childless at the time, his descendants would be numerous like the stars in the sky.
 - 2. In the future, his descendants would serve others in another land for 400 years.
 - a. (That land would be Egypt.)

3. After that, the Lord would judge that nation, but Abraham's people would come out from there.
 - a. (Fulfilled under Moses, with Israel's exodus from Egypt.)
4. Abraham's descendants would return to Canaan and inherit that land, after the sin of the Amorites was "filled up".
 - a. (Entering that land and defeating those living there would be accomplished by Joshua, as described in the **Book of Joshua**.)
- d. The Book of Joshua begins after Moses died. Israel is encamped on the eastern side of the Jordan River, near Jericho. The account in **Joshua 1** begins three days before Joshua is to lead the people across the river, thereby entering Canaan.

II. About the Life and Name of Joshua

- a. Joshua was born in Egypt during the time of bondage, initially given the name 'Hoshea' (later changed to 'Joshua' by Moses). He was the son of Nun (or Nave), of the tribe of Ephraim.
- b. At the time the Israelites left Egypt and crossed the Red Sea, Joshua was a young man, most likely in his twenties or thirties.
 - i. According to **Numbers 32:11-12**, Joshua and Caleb were the only men who were age 20 or older at the time of crossing the Red Sea who would live to enter Canaan.
 1. Twenty was the age at which an Israelite man could enter military service, according to instructions for the census in **Numbers 1:1-3**.
 - ii. In **Exodus 33:11**, when the Israelites are still encamped near Mount Sinai, Joshua, the assistant of Moses, is described as a "young man".
- c. We first encounter Joshua in **Exodus 17:8-16**, shortly after the Israelites cross the Red Sea. While Moses assumes a position on the hill, seated on a rock between two men and holding up his staff, Joshua is leading the Israelite forces against the Amalekites.
- d. Then shortly thereafter, when the Israelites are at Mount Sinai, we see Joshua as Moses' assistant:
 - i. Ascending Mount Sinai with Moses. (**Exodus 24:13**)

- ii. Descending from Mount Sinai with Moses, after Moses first received the 10 Commandments, noticing the shouting in the camp during the golden calf incident. (**Exodus 32:17**)
 - iii. As Moses' assistant and described as a "young man," remaining at the Tent of Meeting with the Lord, even after Moses left. (**Exodus 33:11**)
- e. A couple of years after the first encounter at Mount Sinai, Joshua is one of the 12 men selected, one from each tribe, to "spy out" the land of Canaan. (**Numbers 13-14**)
 - i. Only Joshua and Caleb, two out of the 12, come back with a favorable report. They insist that, regarding the people of Canaan, "their time has come and gone, but the Lord is with us. Do not fear them." (**Numbers 14:9-10**)
 - 1. However, the Israelites try to stone these two and want to go back to Egypt.
 - 2. The people are sentenced to 40 years in the Wilderness, until such time as all the men over age 20 who were numbered in the census (except Joshua and Caleb) have died. One year for each day that the 12 spies explored Canaan. (**Numbers 14:28-38**)
 - ii. In the place where the 12 spies are named, it explains that Joshua was originally known as "Hoshea, son of Nun (or Nave) "; however, Moses gave him the name "Joshua." (**Numbers 13:16**)
 - 1. The great significance of that name change.
 - a. In the Greek LXX (the Old Testament the apostles quoted from, and the Old Testament of the early Christians), the name is identical to the name of Jesus in the Greek New Testament.
 - i. "Οὗτός ἐστιν Ἰησοῦς ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων." (**Matthew 27:37**, Scrivener 1881)
 - 1. (The sign above Jesus when he hung on the cross read: "This is Jesus, the king of the Jews.")
 - ii. "Καὶ ἀπέστειλεν Ἰησοῦς υἱὸς Ναυὴ ἐκ Σατταὶν δύο νεανίσκους κατασκοπεῦσαι...." (**Joshua 2:1**, LXX Swete)

1. “And *Jesus* (a/k/a Joshua) the son of Nave (a/k/a Nun) sent out two young men from Shittim to spy out...”
- iii. See also **Acts 7:45** (in Stephen’s speech to the Sanhedrin) and **Hebrews 4:8-14** in an interlinear Greek New Testament. When referring to the ‘Old Testament Jesus’, even though the names of *Jesus* the Christ and *Jesus* the son of Nun/Nave are identical in Greek, modern NT translators render the one from the OT, ‘Joshua’.
- b. From Justin Martyr, writing c. 160 AD, in his *Dialogue with Trypho, a Jew*:
 - i. “Thus it is written: ‘And the Lord spoke to Moses, Say to this people, Behold, I send My angel [= messenger] before your face, to keep you in the way, to bring you into the land which I have prepared for you. Give heed to Him, and obey Him; do not disobey Him. For He will not draw back from you; for My name is in Him.’ (**Exodus 23:20-21**) Now understand that He who led your fathers into the land is called by this name Jesus, and first called Auses (Hoshea). For if you shall understand this, you shall likewise perceive that the name of Him who said to Moses, ‘for My name is in Him,’ was Jesus.
 1. (Source: Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho, a Jew*, chapter 75; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 1, p. 236)
 2. On the same point, see Tertullian in ANF 3.163-164 and 3.335.
- c. Justin continues later in the same work:
 - i. “What I mean is this. Jesus (Joshua), as I have now frequently remarked, who was called Hoshea, when he was sent to spy out the land of Canaan, was named by Moses Jesus (Joshua).
 - ii. “Why he did this you neither ask, nor are at a loss about it, nor make strict inquiries. Therefore Christ has escaped your notice; and though you

read, you understand not; and even now, though you hear that Jesus is our Christ, you consider not that the name was bestowed on Him not purposelessly nor by chance.

- iii. "But you make a theological discussion as to why one 'α' was added to Abraham's first name; and as to why one 'ρ' was added to Sarah's name, you use similar high-sounding disputations. But why do you not similarly investigate the reason why the name of Oshea the son of Nave (Nun), which his father gave him, was changed to Jesus (Joshua)?"
- iv. "But since not only was his name altered, but he was also appointed successor to Moses, being the only one of his contemporaries who came out from Egypt, he led the surviving people into the Holy Land; and as he, not Moses, led the people into the Holy Land, and as he distributed it by lot to those who entered along with him, so also Jesus the Christ will turn again the dispersion of the people, and will distribute the good land to each one, though not in the same manner. For the former gave them a temporary inheritance, seeing he was neither Christ who is God, nor the Son of God; but the latter, after the holy resurrection, shall give us the eternal possession."
 - 1. (Source: Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho, a Jew*, chapter 113; found Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 1, p. 255)
- d. Several years ago, a friend sent me a video of a debate between a Christian (David Wood) and a Muslim (Ali Atie). He sent me a link with a suggestion to check a segment where the Muslim challenged the Christian, "If Jesus was the Christ, why can't you show me a place in the prophecies where his name is given in advance?"
 - i. The Christian (Protestant) debater side-stepped that question, since he clearly did not know how to answer it.

- ii. However, if someone like Justin Martyr had been given the same question, they would have “knocked it out of the park.”
- f. Later, when Moses is informed that he will die in the Wilderness without crossing over into Canaan, he is concerned about what will happen to the people.
 - i. Read **Numbers 27:12-17**.
 - 1. Moses asks, “Who will lead them?” so they will not be like “sheep without a shepherd.”
 - 2. He is told to lay his hands on ‘Jesus’, to appoint him to succeed Moses.
 - 3. This foreshadowed something that Jesus the Son of God would say over 1,000 years later.
 - a. “Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.” (**Matthew 9:35–36**, NKJV; similar to **Mark 6:34**)
 - b. Jesus would be the name of the one appointed to succeed Moses. He would complete the mission Moses began, bringing God’s people into the Promised Land.
 - c. He would be the one to fill the void so that the people would not become like “sheep without a shepherd”.
 - d. That is why an angel announced to both Mary and Joseph, separately, that the son Mary would have would be named “Jesus”. The same name as the first successor to Moses.
- g. At the end of Moses’ life, the leadership role is transferred to Joshua. (**Deuteronomy 31, 32 and 34**). Since the people had completed their 40 years in the Wilderness, Joshua would now be at least 60 years old; perhaps in his sixties or seventies.
- h. One of the remarkable things about Joshua, who will die at the age of 110: I am not aware of him ever sinning or doing anything wrong.

- i. Unlike so many famous people in the Bible, such as Noah, Lot, Abraham, Jacob, Job, Solomon, Hezekiah, Jonah, etc.
- ii. He is in elite company, perhaps with Daniel, Joseph and very few others (including Jesus) who have much recorded about their lives, but no sins or shortcomings are mentioned.

III. The Lord Encourages Joshua and Calls Him to Be Strong and Courageous

a. Read **Joshua 1:1-9**.

- i. Moses has died (**Deuteronomy 34**). Joshua is now fully in charge of Israel.
- ii. The Lord tells Joshua the following:
 - 1. It is time for Joshua to lead the people across the Jordan River.
 - 2. The Lord will be with Joshua as He was with Moses. None of their enemies will be able to stand against Joshua.
 - 3. They will inherit all the land promised to their forefather Abraham (in **Genesis 15**).
 - 4. The Lord commands Joshua to “be strong and courageous”, not to be cowardly or fearful.
 - 5. The Lord says He will be with Joshua wherever he goes. He will not forsake nor disregard Joshua.
 - 6. The Lord directs Joshua to follow the instructions that Moses had given him.
 - a. He is to meditate on the Book of the Law day and night. It shall not depart from his mouth.
 - b. He shall not stray from it “either to the left nor to the right.”
 - c. By doing that, he will prosper in all his ways.

b. Be strong and courageous.

- i. The Lord admonishes Joshua to “be strong and courageous” three times in this passage.
- ii. The Lord reminds Joshua of what Moses had told all the people, and then told Joshua directly, while Moses was still alive.

1. Read **Deuteronomy 31:1-8**.

2. The reason that they should be strong and courageous, rather than giving way to fear and cowardice, is because the Lord would be with them.
 - a. This was NOT an appeal to:
 - i. Positive thinking.
 - ii. Pep-talk about how strong they were, or how weak their enemies were.
 - iii. Tough-guy mindset.
 - b. It was because the Lord would be with them, just as He had been with Moses.
- iii. **Questions:** Do you ever struggle with fear or worry? Either in general, or in the face of a particularly intimidating challenge in your life?
 1. Do you think of fear as a feeling that comes upon you, and that you have no control over? Or do you have a choice and control over whether you fear or worry?
- iv. Jesus taught that we must not worry or be anxious. Giving way to that is a sin.
 1. Read **Matthew 6:25-34**.
 - a. “Therefore I say to you, *do not worry* about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? “So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?”
 - b. “Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.

- c. "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble." (**Matthew 6:25-34**, NKJV)
 - i. Jesus assumed that we have control over whether we allow ourselves to give in to fear and worry.
 - ii. It reflects a lack of trust in God, who cares for us.
- 2. In **Matthew 10**, when Jesus sends the twelve out to preach in Israel, he warns them of persecution but tells them not to fear nor worry.
 - a. "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows." (**Matthew 10:28-31**, NKJV)
 - i. Jesus taught that we should fear God, not people.
 - ii. Don't fear those who can (at worst) kill only your body, and not your soul!
 - iii. Jesus says that we are valuable to God, that He cares for those who fear Him.
- 3. The night before He was to be crucified, Jesus encouraged his disciples that He would not leave them alone. He (and the Holy Spirit) would be with them, and would take care of them.
 - a. "*Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.*" (**John 14:1-3**, NKJV)
 - b. "*I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.*" (**John 14:18**, NKJV)

- c. "Jesus answered and said to him, 'If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and *We will come to him and make Our home with him.*'" (**John 14:23**, NKJV)
 - d. "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. *Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*" (**John 14:27**, NKJV)
- v. A personal story to illustrate this.
 - 1. Recently, my daughter asked my oldest grandson, Elijah (age 7), who he wanted to become like when he grew up.
 - a. Elijah responded, "Definitely Daddy or Dita (referring to me)."
 - b. Julia then asked him what Dita's "best quality" was.
 - c. Elijah replied, "I think probably that he's really encouraging."
 - d. My daughter, who knows both her father and the English language very well, was surprised at this response. Her first thought was, "He must not know what the word 'encouraging' means!" So, she asked her son to explain further.
 - e. Elijah said, "I just think he's a really good encourager of people. Like when Aya's knee hurts, he just stays with her and says, 'Don't worry, it's okay, you're not gonna die' ...stuff like that."
 - 2. I thought back to a time when I had "encouraged" Elijah like that, when he was feeling a lot of fear. (He has a tendency to get afraid sometimes.)
 - a. A few months ago, I took him and his two younger brothers for a walk in the woods (Middlesex Fells) late in the afternoon, a few days after a severe windstorm.
 - b. The forest looked very different. Many large trees were down, blocking the paths, and we had to climb over trunks and through branches.
 - c. We went deep into the woods. The boys wanted to stay longer, but the sun was going down, so we headed back.

- d. Shadows lengthened, and everything looked a bit different. Elijah, although the oldest, was noticeably afraid and started to worry. I held his hand, told him that I was right there, and we would all be okay. We would make it out of the woods and get home safely, even as it was starting to get dark.
3. I think Elijah understood the word “encourage” as meaning to help put courage into someone, by being there with them. So they would not be alone. To reassure them that together, we would make it through the challenges.
 - a. Noah Webster defined the word ‘encourage’ as follows, in his 1828 American Dictionary of the English Language:
 - i. “Encourage: To give courage to; to give or increase confidence of success; to inspire with courage, spirit or strength of mind; to embolden; to animate; to incite; to inspirit
 1. Example: “But charge Joshua, and encourage him....” (**Deuteronomy 3:28**)
 - b. I believe God was doing the same with Joshua, and Jesus is doing that with us.
 - c. Paul also, in his closing charge in **1 Corinthians**, admonishes us all to be courageous, using the same word “courageous” as the Lord used with Joshua in the LXX:
 - i. “Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong.” (**1 Corinthians 16:13**, NKJV)
 - d. If the Lord is with us, we can be strong and courageous!
- c. Meditate on the word of God day and night
 - i. Reread **Joshua 1:8**.
 1. “The book of this law shall not depart from your mouth, and you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may have the understanding to do all the things written therein. Then you will both prosper, and make your ways prosperous, and have understanding.” (**Joshua 1:8**, LXX, OSB)

- ii. This is one of the earliest places in Scripture to make this extremely important point.
- iii. A few hundred years later, David will expand on the very same point in the opening lines of **Psalm 1**.
 - 1. Read **Psalm 1:1-3**.
- iv. While there is no rule in Scripture that we need to have a daily “quiet time” of reading, the principle of daily devotion to the word of God is laid out here and elsewhere in Scripture.
 - 1. We see it in the story of the manna, the food that fed the people in the Wilderness. Moses said it was given to teach us that “man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God” (**Deuteronomy 8:3**, later repeated by Jesus when He was tempted by Satan).
 - a. Note that it was gathered in the morning, first thing each day.
 - 2. Early Christians saw this foreshadowed by the clean animals (**Leviticus 11:1-8**), which eat only the pure grass and chew on it throughout the day.
 - 3. The call is not just to have a daily time of reading, but also...
 - a. Have the word coming out of our mouths.
 - b. Meditate on it day and night.
 - c. Read it not just to become scholars, but so that we will **DO WHAT IT SAYS**.
 - d. David and Joshua both point to the promise that we will be blessed in all our ways if we do this.
- v. **Closing Challenge:** How is your devotion to the word of God? Do you have the same devotion to reading it, speaking it, meditating on it day and night, *ESPECIALLY* so that you can *do what it says*?
 - 1. This is one of the most important decisions you can make as a Christian, one that will have an enormous impact on your spiritual life and eternal destiny.
 - 2. Be strong and courageous, based on the knowledge that God is with the righteous. And be devoted to the word of God, following the charge given to Joshua.