

JOSHUA

A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 1

Vv. 1- 9 *God's promise to Joshua.* After the death of Moses, God renewed His promise to be with Joshua and exhorted Joshua to make a fearless attack on the nations of Canaan. Joshua was especially instructed to follow the commandments written in the Law of Moses. This is a substantiation of the fact that the Law was written by Moses and was available for Joshua's study.

Vv. 10-18 *Joshua's instruction to the people.* Joshua immediately gave directions to the people to prepare them for crossing the Jordan River. He reminded the eastern tribes of the conditions under which they were to take possession of the land east of the Jordan. The tribes then renewed their pledges of loyalty to Moses' successor.

LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *Great dangers call for great-courage.* The land of Canaan had presented great challenges to the people of Israel. Ten of the spies who had gone through it were afraid to attack the people. Only Joshua and Caleb thought that God would see them through to victory. The death of Moses was a sad event for the people, and the faint of heart may have been afraid to launch the attack. God encouraged Joshua, and he courageously led the people.
2. *A light for the path.* The Psalmist said: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalms 119:105). God told Joshua to do everything according to the Law, which Moses, His servant, had commanded

him. He said, "Turn not to the right hand or to the left" (verse 7). He also declared, "This book of the Law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do all that is written therein" (verse 8). The instructions which God gave to Joshua are good for Christian soldiers to follow today.

3. *God's leaders command respect.* God has never left His people without proper leadership. After Moses died, He raised up Joshua to be their captain. After the days of Joshua, He raised up judges until the time of the kings. In these last days He has turned our eyes toward His Son, and He has provided leaders in the church—elders and deacons. God's people prosper when they have good leadership and when they give the proper respect to their duly appointed leaders.

CHAPTER ONE

God's Promise to Joshua 1:1-9

Now after the death of Moses the servant of the Lord it came to pass, that the Lord spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying,

2 Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel.

3 Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses.

4 From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast.

5 There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.

6 Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I swear unto their fathers to give them.

7 Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper withersoever thou goest.

8 This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written herein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

9 Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.

1. How long after Moses' death did God wait to instruct Joshua? 1:1

God gave specific instructions to Joshua after the death of Moses. When Moses died, no man knew where he was buried. The children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab for thirty days (Deuteronomy 34:8). A thirty-day period of mourning was customary among people of Joshua's time. When Jacob died in Egypt, Joseph commanded that his father be embalmed according to all the arts of the physicians of Egypt. This process took forty days. The people then mourned for an additional thirty days so that the entire period of mourning was "threescore ten days" (Genesis 50:3). When Joseph died, he was also embalmed. We would expect that a similar period of mourning would follow for Joseph (Genesis 50:26). When Aaron died, the children of Israel mourned for thirty days for him (Numbers 20:29). It is reasonable to expect that the people of Israel would have done very

little in the way of preparing to enter Canaan until after the period of mourning for Moses was ended. At the time God began to give specific instructions to Joshua. Joshua turned to the people to give them directions concerning their crossing the Jordan and entering the Promised Land.

2. *What is the difference between the titles of Moses and Joshua?* 1:1

Moses is called the ". . . servant of Jehovah." Joshua is called ". . . Moses' minister." Moses' title is a standing epithet applied to Moses as an honorable title (cf. Numbers 12:7, 8; Deuteronomy 34:6; I Kings 8:56; II Kings 18:12, etc.). Joshua's title is also used in Exodus 17:9 and Numbers 13:16. The Hebrew root, *sharath*, is a verb meaning to *minister, serve*. Joshua was not Moses' minister in the sense in which this word is used in modern church circles. He must have enjoyed a position similar to the one occupied by John Mark, who was called a "minister" of Barnabas and Saul (Acts 13:5). Joshua was an assistant or aide to Moses. As all Christians are servants of God, so was Moses. In a special way, however, Moses did God's bidding.

3. *Did this command come by the use of the Urim and Thummim?* 1:2

When Joshua was first called to his work, he was told that the high priest would bring him God's messages through the medium of the Urim and Thummim. On this occasion, the thing required was not merely that the will of God should be made known to him, but that he should be given the courage and the strength that he would need to carry out the will of God. Actually, this was something of a second calling (cf. Numbers 27:21; see Joshua 5:13). The kind of strength which Joshua needed to begin his conquest of Canaan could hardly come from knowledge which would be gained through the medium of the Urim and the

Thummim. The situation called for God's speaking directly to him.

4. *Why was this second address necessary?* 1:3-9

Even the bravest men hesitate when they come face to face with the great challenges of their lives. They may even step aside and shun to perform their duty for a moment. Joshua was a brave man, and God's assuring him of His abiding presence would give him additional courage. Moreover, the people needed to know that Joshua did not take action until God had given him complete instructions. This would make them much more inclined to follow him. For all these reasons the second address of God to Joshua was not at all superfluous. It only enhances the charge which Moses gave to Joshua as the Lord commanded (Numbers 27:18-23).

5. *How could they understand "this Lebanon"?* 1:4

Even from the place of encampment the mountain would be visible as it towered above the surrounding land. If reference were not made to the peak itself, the range would be visible. With a wave of the hand, a speaker could address the congregation and point to the horizon where the mountains met the sky and formed the northern boundary. The Lebanon range reached to the headwaters of the river Euphrates, which was also mentioned in the setting of the boundaries of the Promised Land. The Great Sea was the Mediterranean Sea and would be the western boundary "toward the going down of the sun."

6. *What promise did God make to Joshua?* 1:5

Especially significant is this promise, "I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." This compares very favorably with the promise made in Deuteronomy 31:8. At that time Moses was giving his final address to the people of Israel. He had reminded them of the way in which God had given them victory over their enemies. He pled with them to be strong and of good courage. He especially

gave a parting exhortation to Joshua as he told him to be courageous inasmuch as he had the responsibility of going with the people into the land which the Lord had sworn to their fathers to give them. Moses knew that Joshua would have the privilege of causing them to inherit it. The greatest encouragement given to Joshua came through knowing God would be with him and not fail him nor forsake him. For this reason, Moses could tell Joshua not to fear nor to be dismayed. God Himself repeats this promise to Joshua.

7. *Was this an unconditional promise?* 1:6

Joshua had something to do. The following list of duties was his:

- a. To be firm and strong (Deuteronomy 31:6)
- b. To rely on God, as Moses had said (Deuteronomy 31:7, 23)
- c. To divide the land for an inheritance (Deuteronomy 1:38; 3:28)
- d. To observe carefully the Law (Deuteronomy 5:29; 28:14)

If Joshua did these things, then God would be with him. If Joshua failed to do these things, he had no promise of God's abiding presence.

8. *What is meant by the expression ". . . not to depart from thy mouth"?* 1:8

This was not to be a theoretical speculation, but a practical study on the part of Joshua. God's Word was to be hidden in his heart. He was to be thoroughly familiar with the Scriptures so that his speech would be flavored by the Word of God. He was to be conversant in the Scriptures so that he would feel at home when speaking to the priests, the prophets, and the elders of the people. Although he was primarily a military man and had the responsibility of government, his campaigns were to be waged in the light of God's instructions. His government

was to be the kind of government which could be blessed by God.

9. *Why did God ask the question, "Have I not commanded thee"?* 1:9

This is what is known as a rhetorical question. It was just another way of saying, "I have commanded thee." It is an assertion on the part of God which could be met only with obedience on the part of Joshua. It was an assurance given by God on Joshua's behalf, and Joshua would naturally be inclined to respond with ready action in the name of God. When Joshua would ask himself this question, the answer would be apparent to him. He knew what God had commanded him. If God had commanded him, he need have no fear of doing what he was expected to do. The question would also remind Joshua that he had no other alternative. If God had commanded him, he could not shun his responsibility. He was not serving man. He was God's servant.

10. *In what other circumstances had God said, "Be not afraid?"* 1:9b

The believer's mind turns reflectively to many such occasions. Adam and Eve had been afraid in the garden of Eden (Genesis 3:10). Their fear came from their disobedience. The shepherds were afraid when the angelic host appeared to them. The angel said unto them, "Fear not" (Luke 2:9, 10). The disciples were afraid when Jesus came unto them walking on the sea. At that time He said, "It is I, be not afraid" (John 6:20). Mortal man is naturally afraid when he stands in the presence of immortal God. He feels his weakness and sinfulness; but when he is willing to yield his will to the will of God, the Heavenly Father speaks peace to the troubled heart. Joshua was not only made fearful by the message from God, but he was naturally afraid of the enemies whom he would face in the Promised Land. Moses had earlier en-

couraged him not to be afraid (Deuteronomy 31:6, 8), and now God speaks directly to encourage Joshua in his work.

Joshua's Instructions to the People 1:10-18

10 Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying,

11 Pass through the host, and command the people, saying, Prepare you victuals; for within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land, which the Lord your God giveth you to possess it.

12 And to the Reubenites, and to the Gadites, and to half the tribe of Manasseh, spake Joshua, saying,

13 Remember the word which Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, saying, The Lord your God hath given you rest, and hath given you this land.

14 Your wives, your little ones, and your cattle, shall remain in the land which Moses gave you on this side Jordan; but ye shall pass before your brethren armed, all the mighty men of valor, and help them;

15 Until the Lord have given your brethren rest, as he hath given you, and they also have possessed the land which the Lord your God giveth them: then ye shall return unto the land of your possessions, and enjoy it, which Moses the Lord's servant gave you on this side Jordan toward the sunrising.

16 And they answered Joshua, saying, All that thou commandest us we will do, and whithersoever thou sendest us, we will go.

17 According as we hearkened unto Moses in all things, so will we hearken unto thee: only the Lord thy God be with thee, as he was with Moses.

18 Whosoever he be that doth rebel against thy commandment, and will not hearken unto thy words in all

that thou commandest him, he shall be put to death: only be strong and of a good courage.

11. *Who are the "officers"?* 1:10

These men were called in Hebrew the *shoterim*. Their duties were varied. At times they seemed to work first at one task and then at another. Their duties may be listed as follows:

- a. To keep family registers (providing for the levying of men at times of war, etc.)
- b. To circulate the commands of the leader
- c. To issue orders to the people

As Israel prepared to cross the Jordan River, these officers were to marshal the hosts of men, women, and children and direct them in the last leg of the march to Canaan.

12. *What were the "victuals (vittles)"?* 1:11

The people were fed by manna through the days of the wilderness wanderings, and this bountiful provision did not cease until after they had renewed the rite of circumcision in the camp at Gilgal (see Joshua 5:12). No doubt the "victuals" included the daily supply of manna, but it would include more than this. It included all the equipment which was necessary for making the journey (see Genesis 24:25).

13. *What action took place after three days?* 1:11

The people expected to move to a vantage point on the Jordan River from which they could cross over after this first three-day period. During this time the spies were to be on their way to Jericho and returning, a time which was lengthened by the necessity of their hiding for three days. The camp of the Israelites had been at Abel-shittim while they were in the plains of Moab. They planned to move from this point down to the Jordan River

during these three days; but when the spies were forced to extend their expedition, the Israelites probably remained in their camp all this time.

14. *How long was it before they crossed the Jordan?* 1:11

Since the spies were absent for three days, it was not until the morning after their return that the Israelites left Shittim and proceeded to the Jordan. At the bank of the Jordan they halted again. After this second pause for three days (see 3:1, 2) they went across the river.

Three days before leaving Shittim	3
(spies in hiding)	
A day going to the edge of Jordan	1
Three days before starting across	3
A day in crossing	1
	—
	8 days

Joshua, no doubt, intended to proceed to the Jordan and cross it within the three days. He probably sent spies to Jericho on the same day he issued the orders to the people. As the spies were forced to hide in the mountains for three days, Joshua could not remove with the people until after their return.

15. *Did all the eastern tribes go over Jordan?* 1:12

Only forty thousand men of war from the eastern tribes went over the Jordan River. There were 43,730 men of the tribe of Reuben who were twenty years of age and older. Gad had 40,500 men of this age. If the tribe of Manasseh were evenly divided, there would have been 26,350 men in the half tribe of Manasseh, since the total was 52,700 in this tribe. The total of this would be 110,580 men in the two and one-half tribes who wanted to live east of the Jordan. When Moses gave these people permission to settle east of the Jordan, they promised to arm themselves and to pass over the Jordan with the other

warriors of Israel. After the conquest was finished, they were to be allowed to return to their homes. The historian says about forty thousand of these men prepared for war passed over before the Lord unto the battle to the plains of Jericho (4:13). This would leave some seventy thousand men behind to care for the women and children who would not pass over to the western side of the river.

16. *Why had Moses instructed these tribes?* 1:13

When the men of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh first approached Moses about settling east of the Jordan, he thought they were like the ten spies who had been afraid to enter into the conquest of the land. The men of the two and one-half tribes assured Moses they were not afraid. They made request for this land because it was suited to their occupations. They found it to be a good land, and they desired to have this for their inheritance. At the time they assured Moses they would go over and fight. They promised they would not return to their houses until all of the children of Israel had inherited their place in the Promised Land. When Moses received this assurance, he granted their request and told them they might build cities for their little ones and folds for their sheep (Numbers 32:24). The land which they inherited was the territory which had formerly been the kingdom of Sihon, king of the Amorites, and the kingdom of Og, king of Bashan (Numbers 32:33).

17. *Why did the eastern tribes reassure Joshua?* 1:16

After Moses had settled the question about inheriting the land with these eastern tribes, he gave express commandment to Eleazar, the priest, and to Joshua, the son of Nun, as well as to the chief fathers of the tribes of Israel. He made it clear to them that if the children of Gad, the children of Reuben, and the children of Manasseh kept their part of the agreement then they were to inherit Gilead. The pledge of allegiance of these three eastern

tribes had been made to Moses. Since Moses was dead, it was proper for the men of these tribes to give their pledge of allegiance to Joshua. They were willing to go over the Jordan and fight before they received their inheritance. They assured Joshua they would put to death any man among them who proved to be disloyal to Joshua. Their only prayer was for the Lord God to be with Joshua as He had been with Moses (1:17).

TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 1

1. What was the normal period of mourning for a deceased person?
2. What was Moses' title in Scripture?
3. What was Joshua's title in Scripture?
4. Was Joshua given an unconditional promise of God's blessings?
5. Did Joshua have any of the written Word of God to guide him?
6. Did Joshua have any subordinate officers to help him?
7. Were the people still receiving manna from heaven when Joshua became their leader?
8. Who were the "eastern" tribes?
9. What kings had formerly dominated the land east of Jordan?
10. Who was Israel's high priest when Joshua was made leader of the people?

A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 2

- Vv. 1-7 *Rahab hides the spies.* The two spies sent out by Joshua found the house of Rahab to be a place where they could learn about the activities of the community. Although they must have taken every precaution to conceal their true identity, the king of the city learned of