

# **JESUS: THE TRUE JOSHUA**

## **Joshua 1:1-9 with Matthew 1:21 & Hebrews 4:1-11**

### INTRODUCTION

The surest way to get lost whether in the woods or in life is to be preoccupied with the trees, the details of life and so lose sight of where you are going. In the woods, without regular reference to a compass and a map you will get lost in the trees. In the same way, in life, without regular reference to the ultimate goal of life and evaluation of where you stand in relation to it, you will get lost in the details of living. While this evaluation can be done at any time of the year, it is traditional in our culture to use the end of one year and the beginning of another to give attention to where we are at in relation to where we are going so that we can make corrections to our course.

Therefore, it appears to me fortuitous that we end 2008 considering how it is that Jesus is the true Joshua. If there ever was a time in biblical history when an entire people were called upon to reorient themselves to God's ultimate goal, it would be that generation of people who were camped on the eastern shore of the Jordan River awaiting God's command to enter into and conquer the Promised Land of Canaan. Let me summarize for you the story and situation of these people and then show you how they and their leader, Joshua are a symbol of Jesus and his people, the church. Then as we see how Jesus is the true Joshua we will, like Israel on the banks of the Jordan River, be required to evaluate where each of us stand in relation to that place God is taking us.

For over 400 years, beginning with Abraham, God had been telling the Jewish people that he was going to give them the land of Canaan. When God brought Israel out of their slavery in Egypt and gave them his law at Mt. Sinai he repeatedly told them that his intention was to give to them, as their inheritance, the land of Canaan. However, when God first brought the people to the southern border of the land and told them to enter into it and that he would conquer all the Canaanites who lived in the land, they refused to go in. They only saw the giants who lived in the land and their fortresses. They only saw their own weakness. They declared that it was God's purpose to kill them. They determined that the purpose of their lives was to return to Egypt and live as slaves. In other words, they refused to look at the map and to use the compass of God's promises but instead saw only the trees and thus became lost by embracing a different goal for their lives.

If not for the intercession of Moses, God would have wiped out every single Israelite for their unbelief and rebellion. But because of Moses' intercession God's immediate death sentence was commuted to 40 years of wandering in the wilderness until every adult that was 20 years old or more was dead. He then promised that he would take the children of that generation into the land of Canaan and give it to them as he had promised. It is 41 years after leaving Egypt and crossing the Red Sea that the book of Joshua opens. Every person who was 20 years old or more and refused to enter the land the first time is now dead. Only Joshua and Caleb of that generation are still alive. Moses has died and as we see in Joshua 1:6 God has appointed Joshua to be the one who will lead the people of God into the land and give it to them as their inheritance.

The assertion I am making this morning is that Jesus and all who trust in him are the fulfillment of Joshua and the people of Israel. In other words this is another example of how God prepared the world for the coming of Jesus by teaching through experience of Israel something of the nature and work of Jesus. I want to show you three of the ways that the NT makes the connection between Joshua and Jesus. First, the angel told Joseph, the husband of Mary, that he was to name the baby to be born, Jesus. Jesus is the Greek pronunciation of the Hebrew name Joshua, just like Juan is the Spanish pronunciation of my English name, John. In other words, if the angel had spoken in Hebrew to Joseph he would have told him to name the baby Joshua. In the Greek translation of the OT every occurrence of Joshua's name is the Greek name Jesus. Second, God tells Joshua in v. 6 that he will cause his people to inherit the land. This word and the idea of inheritance is repeatedly used in the NT for the final rest of God's people in the new heavens and the new earth that Jesus accomplishes for us. One example is in 1 Peter 1:3-4 where Peter is enumerating the benefits we receive from Jesus. He says, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who, according to his great mercy, has caused us to be

born again into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade, kept in heaven for you..." Just as Joshua led the people into their inheritance, so our Lord Jesus, through his resurrection has caused us to be born again into our eternal inheritance. Third, Hebrews 4:1-11 explicitly compares and contrasts Joshua and his leading the people into the land of Canaan with Jesus who leads us into God's eternal rest.

As we consider these opening verses of the history of Joshua leading Israel into the land of Canaan we will discover something of the person and work of Jesus and be given an opportunity for each of us to evaluate where we are at in relation to the place to which Jesus is bringing us.

#### MAIN POINT

**God sent Jesus, as the true Joshua, to lead us into our inheritance, the eternal Land of Promise. Therefore...**

#### **I. Jesus was strong and courageous (vv. 6, 7 & 9)**

Three times in the opening 9 verses of Joshua, God tells him to be strong and courageous. It is quite obvious in the case of Joshua why he might be afraid and need God to tell him to not be afraid. While Israel has just conquered two mighty kings, Og, King of Bashan and Sihon, King of the Amorites; yet the victory was won with Moses as their leader. Now Moses is dead and they are about to cross the Jordan River to take on 31 kings and their armies, all of whom live in fortified cities and some of whom are people of extraordinary size. So God first tells Joshua to be full of courage and not fear as he leads the people into the land.

In the same way our Lord Jesus Christ exhibited strength and courage. While he did not lead an army, nor enter into armed combat with human kings, yet his mission was, like Joshua's to establish God's kingdom in enemy territory. His mission was and is to destroy the kingdom of Satan and to set up God's kingdom on this earth. The apostle John in his first letter says that the reason Jesus came into the world was to destroy the devil's work. In Hebrews 2:14 we are told that the reason that the Son of God took on human flesh was so that he might "destroy him who holds the power of death, that is the devil and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death." In Romans 6 Paul says that we have been set free from our slavery to sin and are now slaves to God. This was Jesus' purpose, to set us free from sin and death and hell and to make us citizen's of God's kingdom.

Everywhere Jesus went he was confronted by the emissaries of Satan's kingdom, both demonic and human. The Jewish religious leaders who plotted for three years how they might kill Jesus were declared by Jesus to be the children of Satan who were doing their father's work as they sought to murder Jesus. Listen to John 8:44, "You belong to your father the devil and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning..." So Jesus throughout his life exhibits extraordinary strength and courage as he preaches the gospel to the crowds, heals diseases, casts out unclean spirits and confronts the corrupt leaders of Judaism and of Rome thus arousing their wrath. However, we witness the greatest strength and the supreme courage in the Garden of Gethsemane, the night before he was crucified as he faces the most terrifying prospect that any human can ever face, the just wrath of God against sin.

The anguish of the Son of God as he faced the cross and God's anger that he was to experience upon it is graphically described in the gospels. In the garden he tells his three closest disciples, Peter, James and John, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death..." Luke tells us, "And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like great drops of blood." Three times he asks his father that if it is possible to take the cup from him. That cup he is referring to is the cup of God's wrath against human sin as described in the OT prophets. When we witness Jesus rising from that prayer to face the angry mob sent to arrest him and watch as he resolutely and with dignity faces his human tormentors and endures their torture and then hangs upon that tree, meekly taking upon himself God's wrath against our sin, we are watching the greatest act of human strength and courage ever seen in this world. As we are told in the book of Hebrews he endured that

cross and despised the shame he experienced there because of the joy he knew that would be his after his suffering. Like Joshua he knew that God would do what he had promised. So with strength and courage he entered into battle with death and sin and Satan and hell and overcame them by the power of God as he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand where he now waits for that day when he will finally and fully bring God's rule to this earth and establish God's eternal kingdom.

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## **II. Jesus kept all of God's commands all the time (vv. 7-8)**

What does God tell Joshua is the most necessary thing he must do if he is going to successfully lead the people of Israel in conquering the land of Canaan? What is the primary strategy God tells him to follow in order to be successful in his campaign? He must obey the Law of Moses. If Joshua will talk about and meditate on everything God told Israel through Moses on Mt. Sinai and be careful to obey it all, then he will successfully destroy the enemies of God and establish God's kingdom in the land of Canaan. The covenant or the contract that God made with Israel on Mt. Sinai promises Israel the land of Canaan upon the condition of their obedience to the Law. If they obey the law, then God will drive out the Canaanites and they will possess the land. However, if they disobey the law, then God will throw them out of the land of Canaan. In vv. 7-8 God is merely repeating the conditions of his covenant to the leader of Israel, Joshua, as their representative head.

As we read the rest of the story in the OT we discover that Israel fails time and again to keep the demands of the Law. The question that the OT continues to set before us is this: how is it right for God to keep loving these people and letting them live in the land when they continue to disobey him? How can God remain just and still keep doing good to such evil people? The answer to the question is given in the coming of Jesus. All of God's promises are conditioned upon the perfect obedience of God's people. No human being has ever or will ever obey God's law perfectly, not even Joshua, except for one. What we discover in the NT is that Jesus did what every other human has failed to do: he perfectly obeyed God every moment of his life. As the writer to the Hebrews says, "He was tempted in all ways as we are, yet without sin." He fulfilled the Law and the Prophets not only in their predictive sense but also in his perfect obedience to them. Therefore, Jesus, by his obedience has obtained all that God promised to give to those who obey his law. He has obtained all these blessings not merely for himself but for all his people, all those who trust him alone as Savior and Lord.

I find thinking about Jesus' perfect obedience to be one of the most helpful things I can think about. It is helpful in several ways. First, I am full of awe as I think about the fact that Jesus not only always did the right thing and never did a wrong thing but he also always acted for the right reasons. He always was motivated by a heart that was truly in love with God and people. He always did what he did out of his delight in God, his concern for God's glory and his joy in loving people. It's not just that he never was unjustly angry with his parents or his siblings or his neighbors but that he was patient not simply because he didn't like conflict but because he actually loved people and trusted God to take care of him. He is so much greater than me or anyone I know. Second, thinking about the perfect obedience of Jesus is particularly helpful as I am confronted with my own selfish sinfulness. The question that plagues me and I think anyone who knows himself is this: How can God ever love me when I am such an evil person? The answer to that question is this: because Jesus obeyed the law for me. God looks at me as if I have always obeyed all of his laws all the time from a perfect heart of love for him and others because I am united to Jesus by grace through faith. While I am not a patient man, Jesus always was. While I have never prayed as I ought, Jesus always prayed as he ought. While I am often unjust in my judgment of others, Jesus never was. While I often do not love others, Jesus always loved others perfectly. God treats me as an obedient son because Jesus obeyed the law for me. In addition, it is because Jesus obeyed the law that his death can be for me. He didn't have to die for his sins and so he is free to die for my sins. Thus I am forgiven, set free from my debt to God, because Jesus obeyed God's law all the time. I am, to use a big bible word, justified because Jesus obeyed God's law. That means, I am forgiven for my sins and considered

perfectly righteous because Jesus was careful to do everything written in the book of the Law. The reason Jesus was successful in establishing God's kingdom and will one day fully establish it visibly on this earth is because he obeyed God's law.

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### **III. God was with Jesus (vv. 5 & 9)**

God's promise to Joshua as the leader of God's people in their establishing God's kingdom in Canaan was that he would be with him as he was with Moses, that he would never leave him, nor forsake him and that he would be with him wherever he went. This is an expression of God's covenant loyalty to his servant. In the case of Joshua, he did not deserve to have God be with him in this way as he was not completely faithful to the Lord, as the rest of the book of Joshua will show. The presence of God with Joshua was an act of grace, of unmerited favor. However, this is not the case with Jesus because, as God said at his baptism, "This is my beloved son; with him I am well pleased." Jesus describes God's presence with him in the most remarkable ways. He says that everything the Father does, he, the Son does. He says that he is in his Father and his Father is in him. He says that he and his Father are one. He says to see him is to see the Father. In other words, the language of the NT is not merely that God is with Jesus as he was with Joshua but that Jesus is God himself.

Here again, we see in God's loyalty to Joshua a shadow of the full reality that will be true in Jesus' case. He and the Father are present in and with each other in a way that is ultimately beyond human comprehension. Why was God with Joshua? In order that Joshua might fulfill the promise God made to bring Israel into the land of Canaan. Why was it necessary to send the divine Son, who had the Spirit without measure? Only the Son of God can bring the people of God into the kingdom of God. While our savior must be human as the promises of God are conditioned upon the obedience of a human and a human must suffer the penalty of sin, yet only a divine savior has the authority to die for our sins. If Jesus is not God, then he has no right to act as our substitute. God has said that he is Israel's only Savior; Jonah tells us that salvation comes from God alone; this fact is repeated over and over again in the Bible. Only God can save us from God's wrath. Therefore, our savior must be God. So God the Father is with his Son by his Spirit so that he can obtain our salvation just as God was with Joshua so that Joshua could bring Israel into the Promised Land.

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### **IV. We must trust Jesus to bring us into the Promised Land (Heb. 4:1-3a, 9-11)**

I do not have time to work through the details of the argument in Hebrews 3 and 4. I am simply going to summarize a couple of the conclusions from these chapters. The author to the Hebrews, drawing upon numerous OT references, demonstrates that the land of Canaan, this land that God promised to give to his people has always been a symbol of God's eternal rest, that is, his living with his people forever in the new heavens and the new earth. Every mention of Israel living in the land of Canaan in security and prosperity is referring ultimately to God's eternal rest. What this passage tells us is that every believer in the OT knew that God's promises to give them a land and security were not primarily about the land of Canaan.

So, just as God commissions Joshua to bring God's people into the physical land of Canaan so he has commissioned our Lord Jesus to bring us into God's ultimate Promised Land, the eternal new heavens and new

earth. It is at this point that each of us are called upon to evaluate ourselves and compare our goal for our life with God's goal for our life. In Hebrews 3 and 4 the author to the Hebrews calls these Christians to consider the fact that God killed an entire generation of people because they did not believe that having God's land was good and they did not believe that God could give it to them. They wanted to live in Egypt, not Canaan. They believed they did not need God. So the writer to the Hebrews challenges us in 4:1, "Therefore since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it."

Is it your goal to go to heaven? When you think about coming to the end of your life and looking back on it and answering the question: what did you live your life for?--what will you say? Will you have lived for heaven or for earth? The way you will answer that question at the end of your life is determined by how you answer that question each day of your life. So today, is your highest ambition, your most fervent desire, your greatest longing to live with God in that new world he will create when Jesus returns or is it something else? The ultimate happiness of heaven is that Jesus, the Son of God and our Savior is there. As Paul describes Christians in his second letter to Timothy, we are people who are longing for his appearing, not getting to play golf forever. To be with him, to see him in his glory, to delight in him forever, this is what ravishes our hearts and calls us towards heaven. Is this what you are living for?

Closely following upon that question is this one, is that what you are trusting Jesus for? Are your prayers and your faith in Christ concerned with having a successful and happy life here on this earth or are your prayers and your faith in Christ fixed upon him as your only hope of attaining heaven? There is no end to the people who are asking Jesus to help them with their money and their health and their safety and their kids and their spouses and their jobs and their sex lives. It is not necessarily wrong to ask God's help for the problems and concerns of this life. But are you trusting Jesus to do for you what he came to do? He came to save you from your sins. He came to bring you to God forever. He came to bring you into that land where only the holy may enter. All that he did, beginning with his birth and continuing now with his intercession in the Father's presence and culminating in his return is for the purpose of bringing all who trust him into the presence of God forever. Right now, as you stand at the brink of another year I ask you to examine yourself in light of God's ultimate purpose in sending Jesus as the true Joshua. Will you live this year trusting Christ to bring you to heaven?

Just like the Israelites, when they trusted Joshua as God's appointed leader to bring them into the Promised Land took certain actions, such as crossing the Jordan River, marching around Jericho for seven days, etc. so we also, when we trust Christ to take us to heaven will do certain things. If you tell me that you are going to take a vacation to Hawaii I will expect to observe certain actions in your life. You will make reservations for hotels. You will buy plane tickets. You will pack up your summer wardrobe. You will make arrangements to take care of your dog. Finally, you will put your faith in an airplane to take you to Hawaii by getting on it. If you do not do any of these actions, then, no matter what you say, you are not going to Hawaii on vacation. If you believe Hawaii is a worthy destination and if you have faith in travel agents and hotels and planes, then you take certain actions. Listen to me, only those who rest from all their work and rest in Christ will be saved. But everyone who rests in Christ, who trusts his promise to save, lives a life of growing obedience to Christ. We don't live as if this world is our home. We live as though Jesus truly is taking us to heaven and living with God forever is the end and goal of our living here. In January we are going to be considering together what some of those actions that come from our faith will be. We will be considering how prayer, giving money to God's work, evangelism and learning doctrine are all expressions of our faith in Christ who is taking us to live with him forever in God's eternal Land of Promise.

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