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JOSHUA 1:1-2:24

Today, we begin a “whirlwind study” of the Old Testament books of **Joshua** and **Judges**. There is absolutely no way we can cover these books verse by verse...so I hope you'll pray for me each week...that I will key in on the truths of these books that will make a difference in our lives.

Let's quickly set some background for the book of **Joshua**. We already know a little about Joshua from our recent study of the Book of Numbers. Remember when Moses sent twelve men to spy out the land. Ten came back with a very pessimistic report and two came back with a very optimistic report. One of these two optimistic men was Caleb and one of these men was Joshua.

We know that because of the unbelief of the people, the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness for forty years. Don't you know that every time Joshua and Caleb saw each other, they must have said, “If they'd only listened to us...” Day after day, for the next forty years, they watched as all the older generation except themselves died out.

We also know that Joshua has already proven himself. Do you remember the battle the Israelites fought with the Amalekites? Remember that Moses was up on a mountain with Aaron and Hur...and as long as Moses held his hands up, the Israelites were victorious, and when his hands came down, the Amalekites were victorious. So, Aaron got on one side of Moses and Hur got on the other and they lifted the hands of Moses up when Moses became too weary to hold them up himself. All that was going on up on the mountain...but down in the valley, the battle was being led by General Joshua.

So, we know some things about this man, Joshua, already.

Joshua was born a slave down in Egypt.

Joshua was led out of captivity by Moses.

Joshua was a man of faith and a servant of God and loyal friend and follower of Moses.

Joshua became a general who led his people in battle and Joshua became God's choice to replace Moses.

All but the last few verses of the book of **Joshua** was written by Joshua. Hebrew scholars believe Phinehas, who was a priest, wrote the last few verses which tell of the death of Joshua.

So, as the book of **Joshua** opens, the trip that should have taken the people only eleven days had taken them forty years... Moses has died... people are at long last about to enter the Promised Land...and Joshua is God's appointed man to lead them! The old generation, with the exception of Caleb and Joshua, is gone. By the way, Joshua is thought to be about 90 years old when all this takes place...**but even at his age he is able because he is God's man.** He is about to lead his people in a new beginning.

There is a new leader, a new land and a new life before them...

We need to remember that they are not alone. God is with them. God has brought them to this point...and God is not going to abandon them.

The first thing I want us to see this morning is

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1) God's Commission... Verses 1 and 2...

What these folks are about to do is a command from **God**. **God** is commissioning Joshua to lead these folks into the Promised Land... "...arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people..."

Not only do we see God's commission, we also see

2) God's Promises... Verses 3-6...

God sets the boundaries of the land for them. He promised them this land. I think it's very interesting that more than one Bible scholar says the Israelites never ever possessed but 1/10th of the land God gave to them

When was the land given to them? God gave it to them 420 years before through the covenant He made with Abraham. The Abrahamic Covenant was an everlasting covenant. **It could not be broken. The land would always be theirs...** However the **possession** of the land was conditional. Their being allowed to live in the land **was conditional** and it was based upon their obedience to Jehovah! God had told them this over and over.

Let me just say this about geographical locations in the history of Israel. There are four of them and they illustrate to us four spiritual experiences.

Egypt – the place of death and bondage from which Israel was delivered. How were they delivered? By the blood of the lamb and by the power of God. This illustrates the bondage of sin you and I were held by when we were lost. But, the blood of Jesus set us free.

Wilderness – the place of unbelief and disobedience. They nor we can enter into a place of rest and riches if we continue to wander through life in rebellion and unbelief.

Canaan – represents not heaven, but the Christian life. It's a place of conflict, but also of victory. It's a place of faith and obedience and of spiritual riches and rest.

The victorious Christian life isn't a "once for all" triumph that ends all our problems. It's a series of conflicts and victories and also defeats. Praise God that He sometimes just gives us a rest from the conflicts...but they'll surely come again.

Babylon – Israel would be put out of their land because of their idolatry. They would spend seventy years there. This illustrates and parallels for us the chastening God gives His children when they have been disobedient and refuse to confess and repent.

We also see in these verses **three specific promises** God made to Joshua...

1) Israel would enter the land, but they must step out on faith to claim it and possess it.

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2) God would give the victory
“No man will be able to stand before you, I will not fail you and I will not forsake you.”

3) God would divide the land as their inheritance.

And that's what the book of **Joshua** is all about.

The first promise is fulfilled in **Chapters 2 through 5.**

The second promise is fulfilled in **Chapters 6-12.**

The third promise is fulfilled in **Chapters 13-22.**

And at the close of his life, Joshua will remind the leaders of Israel that

“not one thing has failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spoke concerning you. All have come to pass for you; not one Word of them has failed...” (23:14)

Before God could fulfill His promises, however, Joshua had to exercise faith...He had to “be strong and of good courage...” God does not take away our human responsibility just because God gives us promises,.

Charles Spurgeon: “Joshua was not to use the promise as a couch on which his indolence might luxuriate, but as a girdle with which to gird up his loins for activity...”

Not only do we see God's commission, and God's promises, but we also see

3) God's Word...Verses 7-8

It's one thing to say to someone... “be strong, be very courageous...”

It's something else to enable him to do it...

Moses had kept a written record of God's words and acts and committed this record to the care of the priests...

Joshua's courage and success and prosperity were to come from God's Word. Joshua was to have a sword in his hand and the sword of the Spirit in his heart...

Prosperity and success are not to be measured as the world measures them. The “name it and claim it”...the “word of faith” folks would tell us, “just find you some promises in God's Word and claim it for yourself.

No, this prosperity and success speak of the by-products of a life devoted to God and His Word. Now, it may include worldly riches and it may not. Many “poor people” are spiritually prosperous and successful and many “rich people” are spiritually bankrupt.

We've seen God's commission, God's promises, God's Word, and also let's look at

4) God's Commandments...Verse 9...

If we could put ourselves in Joshua's shoes this morning, I believe we would be tempted to be afraid...to tremble.

Think about being elevated to take the leadership of over two million people who had been led by a man like Moses!

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Think about leading these folks who had not been professionally trained in military skills to go in and occupy a land by force! I mean, these folks weren't soldiers, they were shepherds!

Think about the strategy of all this...the organizational skills Joshua must bring forth...the leadership skills he must employ...

I believe Joshua must have been overwhelmed by the task at hand...

But, I also believe that when Joshua felt he was not up to this task, he would remember that it was God who had **called** him and **commissioned** him and **appointed** and **anointed** him.

He knew he had a **divine mandate** and a **divine assurance** from Jehovah and he would be strong and courageous and he would not tremble nor would he be dismayed because he knew the Lord was with him wherever he went!

The rest of **Chapter 1** tells us of how Joshua had his officers to pass through the camp and get the folks ready for crossing the Jordan River into the Promised Land. It also tells of how the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the one half tribe of Manasseh chose to settle on the East side of the Jordan River and how they were still to help their brothers fight on the West side of the Jordan, and we'll see more of that later.

Chapter 2 tells us the story of Rahab, the harlot.

Verses 1-2...

Joshua sent two men into Jericho to secretly spy out the land. These men came to, of all places, Rahab's house. Of all the places these men could have gone...they went to someone who believed their God was a God of miracles and **could and would** enable them to be victorious over her own people.

Do you believe that was happenstance? No, God led them there!

Let me ask you...was Rahab a believer **before** these men came to her house, or did she become a believer **as a result** of her encounter with these men? Well, the commentators I read this week differ on this...

I believe the main thing is that Rahab had faith and she demonstrated by helping God's people and she was rewarded for her faithfulness to do this.

Let's just see a few things about Rahab's faith in the time we have left...
Rahab's faith was

1) Courageous Faith...Verses 3-6...

It took a lot of courage to defy the king of Jericho. Had the king discovered what she had done, she would have been killed as a traitor. Rahab was more than likely the only believer of Jehovah in the entire city of Jericho.

I believe the question that naturally comes up about Rahab is this: if it's true that Rahab was a believer, how do we defend her lying?

Well, we can't...the Bible teaches we're not to lie. **We must understand that God commended her faith, not her lie.** He never condones any sin, yet none are without sin. We all need forgiveness...and praise God He forgives!!

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I truly believe God could have accomplished His purposes **without** Rahab's lying...but the bottom line is that God honored her in spite of her lies, because her heart was to do His will.

By the way, I believe it's very interesting that all the people no doubt had heard the same stories of the miracles God had performed on behalf of the Jewish people, yet Rahab is the only one mentioned as having faith enough to act upon it!

And God rewarded her for her courageous faith...

Rahab is mentioned in Hebrews 11's Hall of Faith.

Rahab is mentioned in James and commended for her works.

And best of all...Rahab is found in the genealogy of the Lord Jesus Christ!!

Rahab may have been a harlot...and Rahab may have been a liar...but look how God used her because of her courageous faith.

Rahab also had

2) Confident Faith...Verse 9

Rahab showed more confidence in Jehovah than the ten spies who went into Canaan forty years before and brought back the bad report, and they were God's own chosen people!! Think about it...**they didn't believe God could give them the land, but Rahab did...she believed God would indeed give the land to the children of Israel.**

3) Covenant Faith...Verses 10-11...

A person can show courageous faith and confident faith, but all of that can be misplaced. **Not Rahab!**

Ex. Kamikaze pilots of WWII

These pilots had courageous faith. It takes courage to fly a plane into a destroyer, folks. They also had confident faith. They were confident that their emperor was their god!

The term LORD Rahab used here is the covenant name for God...it is YAHWEH...JEHOVAH...By the way...this is why many theologians believe Rahab was already a believer...because she used this name for God.

Did someone come and tell Rahab about the covenant keeping Jehovah? Probably not...but she heard what the covenant keeping God had done and she had come to believe that He was more worthy of her faith and worship than the so called gods of her own people.

Not only was Rahab's faith courageous, and confident, and not only did she have a covenant faith, she also had

4) Concerned Faith...Verses 12-18...

Rahab was concerned for her family. She didn't want her family to perish and she did all she could to protect them. Maybe they didn't know Jehovah the way she knew Him, but Rahab wanted to give them every opportunity to...

Just as the blood on the doorposts in Egypt marked a house that the angel of death was to pass over, the scarlet cord marked a house where occupants were to be spared. It's important to note here that Rahab and her family were saved, **not by faith in the cord**, but by Rahab's faith **in the God of Israel.**

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The fact that she hung the cord from the window was proof that she had faith, just as the blood of the lamb put on the doorposts in Egypt proved the Jews believed God and took Him at His Word.

Well, there's so much more we could say about Rahab this morning. I'll never forget several years ago at Christmas time when I asked four ladies in our class to portray the four women who are mentioned in the lineage of the Lord Jesus. Shirlee Jolly portrayed Rahab and when she stood before the class, she stood with her back to the class and she said something like, "I can't face you because you are ladies and I'm not..." May I say to you...Rahab would be welcome in our class any time!

Oh, the things she could teach us about faith!! In fact, we have learned a lot from her today, haven't we?

I believe the book of **Joshua** will teach us a lot in the next several weeks. But, we're going to have to learn it fast, because of the time we've been allotted.

I pray our study in this book will provoke us to look at our own lives and ask these questions:

- 1) Are you still down in Egypt...held bondage by sin?
Or have you been delivered by the blood of the Lamb?
- 2) Are you wandering around in the wilderness in willful disobedience and rebellion against God? Is anything keeping you from crossing over into God's Land of Promise?
- 3) Are you living in Canaan...with all its conflicts?
Do you have more victories in the conflicts or more defeats? The conflicts make us rely on God...and He longs for us to have more and more victories and less and less defeats.
- 4) Is your faith characterized by **courage** and **concern** and **confidence**? Can folks tell by looking at your life that you have entered into the **New Covenant** with the Lord Jesus Christ?

My prayer for all of us is that we will learn the answers to these questions this quarter! Please remember to pray for my preparations of these lessons. I so want to do these books justice, and I so wish we had more time.