

JOSHUA

CONQUERING A HOSTILE WORLD



Joshua: Conquering a Hostile World

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In Genesis 12, 15 and 17, God had promised Abraham that he would have many offspring, have his own land, and be blessed. By the end of the Pentateuch, the promise of offspring had been fulfilled – the Israelites numbered 601,730 men (Numbers 26:51) so perhaps 1-2 million people. After a promise to them 400 years earlier and an exodus 40 years earlier, finally they are at the gateway to the land of milk and honey. Moses is dead and Joshua is now leader. His challenge: take the land of Canaan, the Promised Land. To conquer a hostile world.



Joshua 1:1-18 - The Power of Promise

Be strong and courageous

Observe

1. List all the *promises* and *commands* from God to Joshua or Joshua to the people.

Promises	Commands

Think it Through

2. How are the promises linked to the commands?

3. Why is Joshua suitable for this task of leading Israel into the Promised Land? (Recap by looking at Numbers 13:26-14:9) Why had Israel failed to enter Canaan the first time?

4. Why is courage important for this task of conquering the Promised Land?

5. Verses 12-15 refer to the previous allotment of land given to some of the tribes (see Numbers 32:1-19). What does being courageous mean for the Reubenites? Why do they have to fight with their brothers?

Apply

6. Read Hebrews 3:6-14. How are we to be courageous and encouraged today? (nb. v.6 confidence = courage). What fears do we have (especially in the current political climate)?

7. How can we be encouraged by Christ's example of courage?

8. How can we strengthen each other (Hebrews 3:13) and be each other's allies?

John Piper on Christian Courage

Christian courage is the willingness to say and do the right thing regardless of the earthly cost, because God promises to help you and save you on account of Christ. An act takes courage if it will likely be painful. The pain may be physical, as in war and rescue operations, or the pain may be mental, as in confrontation and controversy.

Therefore, true evangelism and true teaching will take courage. Running from resistance in evangelism or teaching dishonours Christ. There is a kind of cowardice that tells only the truths that are safe to tell.

Martin Luther put it like this:

If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved, and to be steady on all the battlefield besides is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point.

Joshua 2:1-24 - The Promise and the Prostitute

The Conquest Begins with One Family

Observe

1. Find all the verses in this passage indicating some form of “deception”.

Think it Through

2. Why did Rahab deceive the soldiers?
3. In contrast, how did the spies plan to treat Rahab?
4. What are some conditions attached to that salvation? How is this significant in light of the exodus?

5. Are these conditions “works”?

Apply

6. How is Rahab remembered in the New Testament? (James 2:25, Hebrews 11:31) What is the quality that we are to emulate from Rahab? (Matthew 10:11-15, Hebrews 13:2 cf. 2 John 1:10)

7. Is it ok to lie in certain circumstances? How does this affect our gospel ministry to others (1 Thessalonians 2:1-6, 1 Corinthians 2:1-5)

Did Rahab sin by lying?

- Some scholars suggests Rahab did not sin because the ninth command (Ex 20:16):
 - *It depends on the situation.* Joseph Fletcher has popularised the approach known as ‘situation ethics’. Fletcher believes that love “abolishes all law” so in certain situations love can supposedly justify lying, cheating, stealing, abortion, homosexuality, adultery and even murder. So Fletcher’s solution is no solution to the Christian who takes God’s Word seriously (Matt. 5:17-19; Rom. 3:31).

- *It depends on the consequences.* J. I. Packer tentatively suggests that Rahab was not bearing false witness *against* her neighbour but in his *favour*. But Jesus suggests that it is the whole idea of lies that is the issue, not just lying to hurt someone (John 8:44).
 - *It depends on the type of relationship.* For example, Bonhoeffer says that it is not solely a matter of moral character but it is also ‘a matter of correct appreciation of real situations and of serious reflection upon them.’ E.g. I can speak flatteringly to my wife or tell my child that everything will be alright even though it isn’t.
- The evangelical consensus is that Rahab sinned but that God brought good out of the situation. God is a God of Truth and wills us to do likewise (Proverbs 12:22, Ephesians 4:15).

Calvin states,

‘As to the falsehood, we must admit that though it was done for a good purpose, it was not free from fault. For those who hold what is called a dutiful lie to be altogether excusable, do not sufficiently consider how precious truth is in the sight of God... Rahab... does wrong when she falsely declares that the messengers were gone, and yet the principal action was agreeable to God, because the bad mixed up with the good was not imputed. On the whole, it was the will of God that the spies should be delivered, but he did not approve of saving their life by falsehood.’

John Murray too thinks that it is ‘strange theology’ which contends that approval must be extended to all of Rahab’s actions in saving the spies. He considers that Scripture ‘does not support the position that under certain circumstances we may justifiably utter an untruth.’

What do you think?

Joshua 3:1-5:15 - The Promise of Priests

D-Day

Read chapter 3.

Observe

1. Scan Joshua chapters 3-5. What are some hints of the events of Exodus (chapters 12-16)?

Joshua 3-5	Exodus 12-16

Think it through

2. Why these hints of Exodus?

3. There seems to be a lot of preparation before the invasion (the ark of covenant, the stones, the circumcision). Why the seeming delay?

A general Confession to be said of the whole Congregation after the Minister, all kneeling.

ALMIGHTY and most merciful Father; We have erred, and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep. We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We have offended against thy holy laws. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; And we have done those things which we ought not to have done; And there is no health in us. But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable offenders. Spare thou them, O God, who confess their faults. Restore thou them that are penitent; According to thy promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesus our Lord. And grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake; That we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life, To the glory of thy holy Name. Amen.

The Absolution, or Remission of sins, to be pronounced by the Priest alone, standing; the people still kneeling.

ALMIGHTY God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he may turn from his wickedness, and live; and hath given power, and commandment, to his Ministers, to declare and pronounce to his people, being penitent, the Absolution and Remission of their sins : He pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his holy Gospel. Wherefore let us beseech him to grant us true repentance, and his Holy Spirit, that those things may please him, which we do at this present; and that the rest of our life hereafter may be pure, and holy; so that at the last we may come to his eternal joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Anglican Book of Common Prayer (1662)

Joshua 5:13-6:27 - The Promise Fulfilled

The Assault on Jericho

The first obstacle in the conquest is the city of Jericho said to be an unconquerable, walled city. Excavations there reveal that its fortifications featured a stone wall 11 feet high and 14 feet wide. At its top was a smooth stone slope, angling upward at 35 degrees for 35 feet, where it joined massive stone walls that towered even higher. It was virtually impregnable.

1. Draw the battle plan/map as instructed by God.



2. This is a strange battle plan. Why is it like that?

3. The siege and subsequent assault is very violent. Why?

4. Yet, Rahab and her family was saved. What is the significance of this?

Apply

5. Is God fair to judge devastatingly? (Psalm 37:38, Psalm 94:23, Luke 19:27)

6. In light of our collective lifestyle, what do you think God will do to our city and nation? (2 Peter 3:9-10)

7. Where can we seek salvation? (2 Peter 3:9)

Molech

The Canaanites were wicked and cruel. Following their gods of Molech and others, they would practice human sacrifices. The prophets clearly speak of slaughter and sacrifice, and of high places built to burn the children in the fire as burnt offerings (Jeremiah 19:5 Ezekiel 16:20, 21).

This practice was unfortunately followed by Israel - Ahaz, who, like Ahab of Israel, was a supporter of foreign religions (2 Kings 16:12) "made his son to pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the nations, whom Yahweh cast out from before the children of Israel" (2 Kings 16:3). His grandson Manasseh, so far from following in the footsteps of his father Hezekiah, who had made great reforms in the worship, reared altars for Baal, and besides other abominations which he practiced, made his son to pass through the fire (2 Kings 21:6). The chief site of this worship, of which Ahaz and Manasseh were the promoters, was Topheth in the Valley of Hinnom, or, as it is also called, the Valley of the Children, or of the Son of Hinnom, lying to the Southwest of Jerusalem. When King Josiah reformed Israel, "he defiled Topheth.... that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech" (2 Kings 23:10).



God executes his righteous justice on this evil and cruel people.