

Joshua Chapter 1: Walking in the Decrees of God

Joshua 1:1-6 1 "Now it came about after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' servant, saying, 2 "Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel. 3 "Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses. 4 "From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and as far as the Great Sea toward the setting of the sun will be your territory. 5 "No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. 6 "Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them."

1. The book of Joshua is the incredible story of the people of God taking possession of what God has promised for them.
 - a. It also is your story and mine. It is the story of our church! Anytime God has made a promise in your life...you must take possession of that promise to bring it to fulfillment.
 - b. Most of us here have taken a hold of the promise of eternal life. Jesus said in John 3:15, "*everyone who believes in me will have eternal life.*"
 - i. We understand that to obtain the promise of forgiveness and eternal life, we must believe and place our trust in Jesus Christ. We must cease placing our trust and faith in our own goodness and our own works.
 - c. Do we also understand then, that all of the other wonderful promises that the bible contains for us...must be taken possession of? We hear them, we say we believe them, but they don't become realities in our lives because we do not take possession of them.
 - d. Most of you recall the sermon series I led on "Embracing Grace" and the concept that the biblical word for "receive" is not passive but active and implies the "act of taking out of the hand of the one who offers the gift." This is the same concept that runs cover to cover in the bible when it comes to receiving the promises of God.
2. Let's look at the situation of the Israelites in Joshua 1:
 - a. 40 years in the desert, only 2 of the 1.5 million adults who left Egypt cross over the Jordan. (Joshua and Caleb).
 - b. Joshua had been the understudy of Moses, remaining in the tent of the Meeting even when Moses went out to talk to the people.
 - i. Joshua had been in charge of the army of the Israelites when they fought in the desert.
 - ii. He had spent the previous 40 years being trained.
 - iii. He was one of the 12 spies who 39 years earlier had spied out the promised land and wasn't discouraged by what he saw.
 - iv. Imagine if LeBron James got injured and was to be out for the season, and you got a phone call from the General Manager of the Cavs asking you to replace him. *That is a bit like what Joshua must have wondered. Compared to Moses, who was he? Moses had been a prince in the palace of the King of Egypt, he gave it up to side with a group of slaves. Moses led a rebellion against one of the most powerful nations on earth, without an army and won. Moses carried a staff that he threw on the ground and it turned into a snake. When Moses was trapped by the Egyptian army in the back, and the Red Sea in front, he lifted his staff and the sea parted in the middle so that everyone could walk through dry land. Moses asked God for food, and everyday it appeared on the ground. Moses asked God for meat, and thousands of birds flew in to be fried. When they ran out of water, Moses hit a rock and out flowed the water. Moses talked to God face to face, so that when he finished his face was so bright you could barely look at him. Moses spoke words and a small earthquake destroyed his enemies. The words on Moses' tombstone*

are from Deuteronomy 30:12 and they read *“For no one has ever shown the mighty power or performed the awesome deeds that Moses did the sight of all Israel.”* (Read Slowly).

- v. What accomplishments other than being in battle against the Amorites did Joshua have? None. Zilch. No track record. Just a trainee.
 - vi. And now, Joshua is being told to lead the people into a campaign of conquest over enemies that are bigger, stronger and living in walled in cities. Do you think that Joshua had some misgivings? Do you think Joshua had any confidence in his own abilities?
 - c. **I sometimes feel that way as well.** Our church has heard God say He is going to take us into places where we have never been, into a journey with him that we have never had before. We will do things we have never done before. We will see God work in ways we hadn't ever imagined.
 - i. As your pastor, I feel a bit ill-equipped for what lies ahead. But that is exactly what God desires from us. He wants us to trust Him and to depend upon Him and to do exactly what he shows us to do, and as we do so, we will see Him at work. What else could be so exciting and life changing?
 - ii. In a sense, Joshua was taking Israel where no man had gone before.
3. In verse 2 GOD tells Joshua that *“Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel.”*
- a. Moses, the deliverer is dead. Stage One of the journey is over. It is now time to move ahead, into the NEW LIFE that they have been promised.
 - i. For the Christian, the Jordan River represents several things...it represents the Life in the Spirit that God promises His children. It represents our water baptism, of leaving the old and entering the new life. It even represents in the old spirituals, the departure from this life and the entry to heaven. .
 - b. For the Israelites, it is time to go over" and get what God has "given" them! It's time to leave the past behind, none of the original adult slaves survived (except Joshua and Caleb), they were freed from the mentality of slaves. Now it is time to push forward into the life they have been promised.
4. Now the Israelites stand on the Eastern Bank of the Jordan River. God gives them a remarkable promise.
- a. *“Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses. 4 “From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and as far as the Great Sea toward the setting of the sun will be your territory.*
 - b. God states this in the form of a decree. A decree is a powerful thing. We often view decrees as promises. But they are so much more. Because we live in a democracy with a balance of powers, we don't understand the power of a decree given by a king. The closest we might have would be an Executive Order by the President, but even those can be overruled by courts. A king, on the other hand, is a Sovereign of a nation. He is the absolute ruler. So when a king signs a decree, what is decreed has become a reality. (Esther sought a decree from the King).
 - i. **A decree ordains something into existence.** . The decree takes what was a possibility and makes it a reality.
 - ii. God's decrees are projects begun in eternity, Acts 15:17,18 "...the Lord, who does these things that have been known for ages."
 - iii. **Divine decrees are unalterable.** Our God is an unchangeable God who sees that all things happen just as He determined, God's will cannot and will not be frustrated. Isa 43:13 *“Yes, and from ancient days I am he. No one can deliver out of my hand. When I act, who can reverse it?”*

- c. So the question then stands, “what stands in the way of God’s decree becoming reality on the earth?”
 - i. In some cases, nothing. His sovereign act and word and will is enough. Such as Jesus came in the “fullness of time” and was “crucified according to the Divine Plan.”
 - ii. In other cases, He states the conditions for which His decree will be accomplished. That is very apparent in this passage we are looking at today.
 - iii. God states that the land from the wilderness of Lebanon as far as the Euphrates (Iraq) to the Mediterranean Sea. This inheritance, this “gift” although given by God to the Israelites, was not fully “received” by them until the time of David. Did the fact that the Israelites hadn’t claimed the fullness of the decreed promise nullify the promise? No. The land was theirs and still is! They simply didn’t enjoy the privilege of its use.
 - 1. It would be sad to have an inheritance and not use it. Or to own property and never live on it. Yet that is what we do daily when we ignore the promises and inheritance that is ours in Christ.
 - d. Walking in Victory, walking in authority, walking in righteousness...everyone of these statements we say flippantly but do not grasp their power or meaning.
- 5. **Appropriating the promises of God doesn’t come easy.**
 - a. **If it was easy, why aren’t more folks walking in victory?**
 - b. It is not enough to have someone pray for you or over you. That is a wonderful thing, a commanded thing, but there is more. The word of God must be taken by faith, believed in, taken hold of and walked in. This means that there are failures to face, doubts to deal with and opposition to contend with.
 - c. The Israelites would have to walk the land, face their enemies, literally take possession of the land and forcibly remove the current inhabitants.
 - i. They would have to face the sword even as they wielded it. They would face death...and yes, some would die.
 - ii. Some would lose loved ones as they walked out the promises of God. To what end? To see the decrees of God fulfilled.
- 6. What about you and I? We have marvelous promises of God. We have heard many of His decrees for His people. We want the blessings but aren’t willing to pay the price...are we? How many of us are willing to press in and fast, and pray and seek God’s face for hours at a time? That is part of walking in the decrees of God.
 - a. To take by faith doesn’t mean we stand back, detached, aloof, and expect to be able to receive or take the blessings and promises of God without entering into intimacy with Him. **We are spoiled and expect to see television style miracles**...but the truth is, God expects us to be intimate, to see what He is doing and go where He is going.
- 7. *No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you.*
 - a. To know that no opposition would be successful against you...how would that affect you?
 - b. What would you be willing to do if you KNEW you could not fail?
 - i. I am not talking about getting something for you. I am talking about God’s plans. When you are in the middle of God’s will, you have the least to fear. You have this promise in verse 7.
 - 1. I think about when the Trailer Park Ministry was started. God planted a vision in Bill Hill’s mind. God opened doors in a miraculous way for them to have the bible study in the office on Tuesday nights. But this required that Bill go and ask the manager and face the possibility of rejection. This required that Bill and Joyce and their team members go door to door to invite children and deal with the suspicion and doubt from the residents there. Now, almost three years later...it

seems easy. But having been there when it started, I can tell you, it took a step of faith. It took Bill a step of faith to lay hold of God's promise and to walk in it.

- c. He goes on to tell Joshua "No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you."
 - i. The Lord's words imply that Joshua would face opposition, but that this opposition would come to nothing.
 - ii. **The Lord would be with him every step of the way and no one would be able to stand against him.**
 - iii. I don't know about you this morning, but I believe God is saying to us it's time to take the land!
 1. It's time to stop worrying about our obstacles.
 2. It's time to stop worrying about our limitations.
 3. It's time to stop worrying about our problems.
 4. It's time to start believing God and take the land.
 5. We can take the land:
 6. Not because I am a great leader.
 7. Not because you are great followers.
 8. Because we serve a great God who is able.
8. Verse 6 says, *6 "Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them."*
 - a. The phrase "be strong," in Hebrew has the meaning "be(come) strong."
 - b. The word "courageous" means to be stout-hearted and determined in the mind.
 - c. Anxiety, inadequacy, fear, and despair are overcome and replaced by courage and confidence in the realization of God's powerful presence.
 - d. Joshua has no need to be afraid or intimidated because he is now moving in the anointing of God.
 - e. The Lord is challenging Joshua to lay aside all of the thoughts, self doubt and attitudes that are holding him and the people back.
 - i. Lay aside fear
 - ii. Lay aside worry
 - iii. Lay aside inadequacy
 - iv. Lay aside limitations
 - v. Roland Baker "Faith is not the absence of experience but the expectation of it."
 - vi. Retell the Prodigal story's ending: When our Father says to us, "All I have is yours" do we act like the prodigal's brother (the eldest brother) who had it all but never claimed it?
 1. What is our response to our Father's promises? Do we embrace them, claim them, take them by faith and action combined...or do we excuse them away, write them off and make up reasons why we can't do it (like the 10 spies who thought the enemies were too big).
9. Are you willing, ready, to lay aside your fears to claim the promises of God? I prayed a number of them over you last Sunday. Are you willing to get out of debt? Do you desire to know the will of God and to do it? Are you willing to pray for someone to know Jesus Christ as Savior?