

Inheriting God's Promises

The theme of the Book of Joshua is that of inheriting God's promises. God promised to give the land of Israel to the descendants of Jacob. Yet although God promised to give it to them, the people had to make great efforts to lay hold of it.

Joshua and the people of Israel prepare themselves

The Christian takes Joshua 'spiritually'. Although we know that it refers to historical events and must be read quite literally, we also know that it gives us parallels for the Christian to apply to himself. In Joshua chapter 1 the people of Israel prepare themselves for the task of conquering Canaan.

1. Joshua is called to face a new situation.

1. Joshua is called to face a new situation. The deliverance from Egypt is forty years in the past. For forty years the people have been in the wilderness between Egypt and Canaan. Now there is a new situation. *'Moses my servant is dead'*, says God¹. God is getting Joshua to face new responsibilities. He is no longer Moses' assistant. Now he must 'stand on his own feet'.

¹ 1:1-2

2. Joshua has been prepared for the task ahead of him

2. Joshua has been prepared for the task ahead of him. He had fought battles under the leadership of Moses¹. He had been Moses' assistant at the time of the receiving of the law². He had been a man of faith at the time when the Israelites had sent spies to Canaan³. He was aware that God was calling him to this task because he had been commissioned to be Moses' successor⁴. Now Joshua's finest hour has come.

¹ Exodus 17:8-16

² Exodus 24:13

³ Num 13-14

⁴ Num 27:18-23

3. Joshua has to lay hold of what God wants to give

3. Joshua has to lay hold of what God wants to give. God speaks of *'the land which I am giving them'*¹. God is doing the giving but they must do the taking! God is willing to be with them but they have some battling to do to get hold of this territory which God wants them to have. Joshua must not have such a view of the sovereignty of God that he thinks he has nothing to do himself. He must 'arise' and take control of the situation². God invites him to consider the extent of the land³. It has a southern border where the wilderness of the Sinai peninsula begins. It extends north to Mount Lebanon. It reaches east to the River Euphrates. Its western border is the Mediterranean Sea⁴. God promises them complete victory. No enemy will be able to stand before them. God will be with Joshua⁵ and calls Joshua to *'be strong and very courageous'*⁶. It would take a lot of determination to take over the land of Canaan.

¹ 1:2

² 1:2

³ 1:3-4

⁴ 1:4

⁵ 1:5

⁶ 1:6

• Be strong

• Be very courageous

4. Joshua is called to be obedient to the commands of God that have been put into writing.

4. Joshua is called to be obedient to the commands of God that have been put into writing. The courage that was required of Joshua if he was to lead the people into their inheritance included courageous obedience to God's written word. Actually two types of courage were required. Joshua 1:6 has in mind courage in military conflict: *'be strong . . . you shall cause the people to inherit the land.'* Joshua 1:7 has in mind courage to obey God's word: *'be strong . . . according to all the law...'*. There was a danger of deviation, of turning to the left or to the right¹. He had to constantly speak it; *'This book . . . shall not depart out of your mouth...'*². And he had to constantly meditate on it³. It would only be as he implemented God's law that he would have success.

¹ 1:7

¹ 1:8

¹ 1:8

• No deviation

• Constant meditation

5. Joshua is given favour with the people

• The people instructed

• Obedience promised

A pattern for Christians today

God's last word at this point was to call Joshua again to courage ^{¶1}, and at the same time He gave him an assurance of His presence ^{¶2}.

5. **Joshua is given favour with the people.** After being given instructions for himself, Joshua has to give instructions to the people^{¶1}. He commands the leaders of the people to go through the different sections of the camp at the foot of Mount Sinai. The people must get ready to journey towards the River Jordan where they will cross it and forcibly take the land from the Canaanites, as God works for them^{¶2}. Joshua has a special word to the two-and-a-half tribes which have already settled in the empty land, east of the river Jordan. They had promised to cross Jordan and help the other tribes to conquer Canaan to the west of the river^{¶3}. Now as Joshua prepares to move forward he holds them to their promise^{¶4}. The whole people are favourable to Joshua. They promise to obey him as they had obeyed Moses^{¶5}. They trust that God will continue to be with Joshua^{¶6} and they themselves are eager to strengthen Joshua in obeying what God has already said. 'Be strong and of good courage' they say^{¶7}.

All of this lets us know what is needed for the Christian to lay hold of what God wants to give him. Every Christian has an 'inheritance' ahead of him. We repeatedly face new situations as God leads us forward. God prepares us for what He wants us to do for Him. God will do the giving but we must do the taking! We must 'be strong and very courageous'. God's commands involve the leading of the Holy Spirit rather than the law of Moses. Yet the Christian is still called to be obedient to the commands of God that have been put into writing. The teaching of Jesus recorded in the gospels, the example of the church in the Book of Acts, the guidance of twenty-one New Testament letters and the encouragement of the Book of Revelation is still the written Word of God that in one way or another requires daily meditation and daily obedience if we are to gain our inheritance.

- ¶1 1:9a
- ¶2 1:9b
- ¶1 1:10-18
- ¶2 1:10-11
- ¶3 see Numbers 32:1-42
- ¶4 1:12-15
- ¶5 1:16-17a
- ¶6 1:17b
- ¶7 1:18, reinforcing 1:9

	<p>Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His <i>Preaching Through The Bible</i> (PTTB) books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.</p>	
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