

Final Paper - Joshua
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After Moses had led the people of God through the wilderness for forty years, it was time to enter the Promised Land. Moses, however, would not be the man to lead the people on this journey of conquest, but there was another who would. His name is Joshua. This paper discusses Joshua's background, some leadership principles and Joshua's characteristics, how God blessed his life and leadership, five principles that apply to people today, and how Joshua is a type of Christ.

Background Information

Joshua was born during the captivity in Egypt, of the tribe of Ephraim (Numbers 13:8, NIV), and journeyed with the Israelites out of Egypt during the time of the exodus. Exodus chapter 17 eludes to Joshua's knowledge of military matters when it records that he was charged with choosing some men to fight the Amalekites. God instructed Moses to record the victorious outcome of this battle and to make sure that Joshua hears the report as well. With faith in God, knowledge of military matters, and loyalty to his leader, Moses would make Joshua a trusted aid (Exodus 24:3, NIV). Later, Joshua would be one of the twelve spies sent into Canaan, and would be only one of two that would return with a good report (Exodus 14, NIV). Joshua and Caleb understood that God would keep his promise and deliver this land to them. Their faith was unwavering.

However, the people were not convinced, particularly after hearing the bad report from the other ten spies, and they rebelled against Moses' leading of the people into the Promised Land. Thus God told Moses that they would wander through the wilderness, until that time, that all those twenty and over should be dead. Then, the next generation, and Joshua and Caleb because of their faith, would enter the Promised Land.

While God told Moses he would see the Promised Land, he would die before entering into it. Prior to Moses' death, God told Joshua, "Be strong and courageous, for you will bring

the Israelites into the land I promised them on oath, and I myself will be with you”

(Deuteronomy 31:23, NIV). The book of Joshua (NIV) picks up with God’s people about to enter the Promised Land.

Leadership Principles

There are certain fundamental truths or principles that every spiritual leader must possess in order to be effective. Sanders (1994) describes two such principles. The first principle is that a leader must prepare for leadership. This preparation may include becoming spirit filled, learning how to skillfully cast a vision to the people being led, how to delegate, and act with authority. The second principle is that a leader must be equipped to handle the suffering or difficulties of leadership. A leader must know how to handle criticism, act with courage and discipline in the face of public disagreement, and overcome the temptations of pride and overconfidence. In other words, a leader must be certain in uncertain times.

From the background information above, Joshua’s relationship with Moses undoubtedly gave him innumerable opportunities to gain wisdom and understanding about God, the law, and God’s plan for the future of Israel. During the time in the wilderness, Joshua would also have seen by Moses’ example, how to handle the difficulties of leadership. Some of these include motivating the people to trust God, dispensing justice, and knowing when to delegate. Some of these issues will be discussed further in the context of Joshua’s particular characteristics.

Leadership Characteristics and People Management

Joshua, like any effective spiritual leader, exhibits certain character traits and leadership abilities. First and foremost, to be a spiritual leader, one must have the spirit of God within them. When Moses was trying to determine his successor, he went to God. God replied that he should use Joshua, “...a man in whom is the spirit...” (Numbers 27:18, NIV). No doubt here, God gave his stamp of approval on Joshua’s spiritual qualification! While any man could have

lead for a while with just his natural abilities, it would take a spirit filled man with trust in God to overcome the battles that would soon be faced by the leader of the Hebrews after crossing the Jordan. Joshua was certainly a spiritual man his entire life, but he did not go to God with every decision and this would cause some hardship for the Israelites.

Before crossing the Jordan, Joshua exhibits a second characteristic of leadership. Due to his walk with God, he was able to know God's will or vision for the Hebrew nation. God tells Joshua to get the people ready for the crossing of the Jordan (Joshua 1:2, NIV). "I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses" (Joshua 1:3, NIV). God then describes the extent of the territory and says in Joshua 1:5, "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" (NIV). After sharing this vision with the people, Joshua was able to move in an authoritative way, understanding not only the end result, occupation of the Promised Land, but also the process to get there. Joshua was able to effectively delegate as needed, in order to coordinate the movement of the ark, the people, and especially, the fighting men. In doing this, he did not take the emphasis off of the will of God. This is evident in the story of the crossing of the Jordan. In Joshua chapter 3 and verses 2-4a, it says, "After three days the officers went throughout the camp, giving orders to the people: "When you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the priests, who are Levites, carrying it, you are to move out from your positions and follow it. Then you will know which way to go..." (NIV). A spiritual leader can accomplish a great deal when God's people know and understand his or her vision. In this case, the people took their first steps into the Promised Land.

The people cross the Jordan and then face their first major battle, Jericho. Joshua has already sent spies into the city, who with Rahab's help in escaping, are able to report back what they have found. God gives Joshua the plan to have the armed men march around Jericho once

for six days and then on the seventh, march around it seven times and then shout. At the shout, the walls will collapse so the city can be taken. Only Rahab and her family are to be spared. So Joshua commands the people and also tells them they are to “keep away from the devoted things, so that you will not bring about your own destruction by taking any of them. Otherwise you will make the camp of Israel liable to destruction and bring trouble on it” (Joshua 6:18, NIV). The battle is won. Rahab and her family are spared. “But the Israelites acted unfaithfully in regard to the devoted things” (Joshua 7:1, NIV). Joshua does not know it yet, but he is about to face some of the suffering of leadership discussed earlier.

With confidence, but without seeking God first, Joshua decides the next city to take is Ai. He sends spies and they report back that the entire army is not needed, perhaps only a few thousand (Joshua 7:3, NIV). Joshua has not gone to God with this and he is also unaware of God’s anger about Achan taking the devoted things during the battle of Jericho. This moment of weakness on Joshua’s part would cost the lives of those men that went to Ai because God is not with them and they are defeated. Joshua responds to this tragedy by humbling himself before God and learning a lesson he would not have to repeat.

He questions God’s plan asking, “Ah, Sovereign Lord, why did you ever bring this people across the Jordan to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites to destroy us? (Joshua 7:7, NIV). He wonders aloud if they should have stayed on the other side of the Jordan as well as his fears of Canaanite aggression. Then God explains the sin that caused the defeat at Ai.

With God’s guidance, Achan is determined to be the guilty party and he confesses to the sin he committed. Justice is delivered and Achan along with his family are stoned according to the law. This day, Joshua had to administer punishment to a single family because of the sin of a single man, or else the entire nation would have suffered. He was protecting the people from spiritual punishment much the same way he had tried to protect them militarily, by following

God. Joshua had the integrity to act with courage and discipline in delivering the justice that Achan deserved. This is something that must have caused him anguish, the suffering of leadership.

The Israelites then go against Ai again and are victorious. They would continue their advance into the Promised Land and eventually take most of it. God gives them rest from their enemies, and when Joshua is at quite an old age, he gives some final instructions to the people and once again gives a vision. He first instructs the leaders to be strong, obey the law, to avoid associating with other nations still in the land, and cling to God (Joshua 23, NIV). He then warns them that if they disobey, God will no longer be with them, and will allow those nations to become snares and traps for the people of Israel.

Joshua then addresses the people (Joshua 24, NIV) and gives them a brief history of what God has done for them going back to Abraham. He gives them similar warnings about the other nations in the land and how they must choose whom they will serve, gods of the land or the Lord. In doing all of this, he reiterates the vision of how the focus should be on God and that with Him the nation will prosper, but without Him it will not.

The Blessings of God

It is in this latter speech that Joshua himself describes some of the blessings of God over the course of his life. Joshua explains that God saw the enemies who rose up against His people and He delivered them into the hands of the Hebrews. He gave them land on which they did not toil, cities they did not build, and fruits they did not plant (Joshua 24, NIV).

In addition to the people as a whole, God also blessed Joshua personally in his life and leadership. In addition to being blessed with the traits and abilities mentioned previously, there are two key blessings worth noting. First, it cannot be said too often how important a blessing is in having a Godly example. God blessed Joshua with one such Godly example in Moses. He

could see the mighty hand of God in action as Moses and Pharaoh would spar back and forth over the issue of freedom for the Hebrew people. He would see it again at the crossing of the Red Sea. While seeing the miracles were important, seeing the example of a spirit filled man would be even more important. How Moses would humble himself before God and intercede for the people, study the law and live by it, and serve as judge or general when needed.

Secondly, a spiritual leader does not get very far without being blessed with spiritual followers. God's spirit was in the people when they submitted themselves to his leadership, often at times when success depended on a miracle. When Joshua laid out the vision to the people, to cross the Jordan and take the land God had promised, they responded by saying, "Whatever you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. Just as we fully obeyed Moses, so we will obey you..." (Joshua 1:16-17, NIV).

Principles that Apply Today

"Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful" (Joshua 1:8). The first principle that can be applied to people today is that God is ready to bless anyone but they must stay close to the word of God and obey his teachings. A wise person will stay the course regardless of what is going on around them and will not deviate from it, either by over reacting or under reacting ("...do not turn from it to the right or to the left..." (Joshua 1:7, NIV)). For Joshua, obeying the law was the first step to victory over the heathen in the Promised Land. Likewise today, God uses the word to help people wise enough to heed his teachings, to obtain victory over the bondage of sin in their lives.

The second principle from Joshua that can be applied today is that a saving faith requires not only belief, but action as well. The spies that Joshua sent into Jericho became trapped. The king and his men were aware of their entry into the city in order to spy on them. The spies came

to Rahab and she hid them safely in the roof from the king's men. After nightfall, she climbed up and spoke with them saying, "I know that the Lord has given this land to you...for the Lord your God is god in Heaven above and on the earth below. Now then please swear to me by the Lord that you will show kindness to me and my family, because I have shown kindness to you" (Joshua 2:9,11-12). Rahab had faith in God and when some of God's people needed help, she acted on her faith by risking her life in hiding them. She had faith that this act would bring about salvation rather than destruction for her and her family, and she was rewarded for her faith. For today's individual, faith without action will lead to salvation through Jesus Christ by grace, but acting on our faith helps lead others to the same saving grace. God knows our faith in the heart but others know our faith by our actions.

The third principle from Joshua that can be applied today is sanctification. Before crossing the Jordan, an act that would forever changes the lives of God's people, Joshua told them to "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you. (Joshua 3:5, NIV). They were to set themselves apart as a holy people. For an individual today, no major decision should be made or action taken without first setting themselves apart and seeking the will of God.

The forth principle from Joshua is that one's sin will come back to them and have consequences beyond themselves. Joshua chapter seven tells the story of Achan and how he took the devoted things during the battle of Jericho against God's instructions. The result was the loss of the next battle at Ai. Joshua goes to God and after a process, determines that Achan had committed the sin. Achan confessed, but that was not enough, for the law had to be obeyed. The law states that not only Achan would suffer destruction but also all he had, including his family. One erroneous decision by Achan caused much heartache and grief for the entire Hebrew nation. There is a philosophy today that anything is ok as long as it does not effect

others. What they fail to consider is that nobody lives in a vacuum, their actions do have an effect on somebody, somewhere, even if they don't realize it.

The fifth principle from Joshua is the need for revival. After the initial battles in the promised land, Joshua led the people to Mount Ebal, where he built an alter to the Lord. He made a copy of the Law of Moses, and he read the law, its blessings and curses (Joshua 8:30-35, NIV) to the people. Those then, just as people today, need to be reminded of how God blesses and what he expects in return. This applies not just to a country, city, or body of believers, but also to each and every individual, for that is where God dwells and from which His mighty plan is accomplished.

Joshua – a type of Christ

The meaning of Joshua's name and result of his life's work make him a picture of what Christ will someday do for the believer. Joshua was originally called Hoshea, which means "salvation". Moses changed his name to Joshua which means "The Lord saves" (NIV, 1984). Joshua is considered to be a type of Christ because just as Christ is expected to one day take all believers to a better country, so did Joshua do for the people of Israel by bringing them into possession of the Promised Land (Halley, 1965). These creation of new nations, past and future, were and will be as a result of God's grace, His intervention for His people, and for His glory and purpose.

Summary

This paper has discussed various aspects of Joshua beginning with some background information of how he became the leader of the Hebrew nation during the period of conquest. Joshua, like many other spiritual leaders of the Bible and today, exemplifies the leadership principles of preparation and suffering. He also possessed many leadership characteristics like the ability to cast a vision to the people, delegate, act with courage, discipline, and integrity. He

was also teachable in overcoming the weakness of over confidence. This paper also discussed how not only the Hebrew nation was blessed of God but also the blessings of God on Joshua. Found within the pages of the Book of Joshua are many principles applicable to today's believer. Five of those include the need to study God's word, saving faith requires action, the need to be sanctified, sin has consequences, and the need for revival. Joshua is a powerful example of the salvation possible from God. Joshua was a type of Christ for his people then of what Jesus Christ is to people today.

References

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