

Leadership Changes in the Promised Land

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[0 : 00] So as I say, we're going to begin studying the book of Joshua for the next little while just to introduce it. It's interesting that Joshua is author, Joshua is the title, and Joshua is the key theme in the sense that Joshua means the Lord saves.

Now, the book of Joshua is all about the next phase of God's salvation plan. It records the next phase of the history of redemption after the death of Moses.

It will see the people of God led by Joshua enter into the promised land, engage in conquest in order to bring God's judgment and for them to enjoy salvation.

And then we see them sharing out the inheritance as God fulfills his promise. Joshua is a prophet as well as being leader, and he is deliberately, for the people then and for our benefit today, choosing sermons.

He's preaching to us to preach more of God's redeeming love to us. This isn't just the history, this is the history of God's acts, revealing God's character, showing God's covenant love.

[1 : 22] So with that in mind, we're going to hear Keith read for us from Joshua chapter 1, and then he'll pray, and then we'll get into our text. Our scripture reading is from Joshua chapter 1, verses 1 through 18.

After the death of Moses, the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua, son of Nun, Moses' assistant, Moses, my servant, is dead.

Now then, you and all these people get ready to cross the river Jordan into the land I'm about to give to them, to the Israelites. I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses.

Your territory will extend from the desert of Lebanon and from the great river, the Euphrates, all the Hittite country to the Mediterranean Sea in the west. No one will be able to stand 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. Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their ancestors to give them.

[2 : 24] Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you. Do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go.

Keep this book of the law always on your lips. 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.

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid. Do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go. So Joshua ordered the officers of the people, Go through the camp and tell the people, Get your provisions ready.

Three days from now you will cross the Jordan here, and go in and take possession of the land the Lord your God is giving you for your own. But to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh, Joshua said, Remember the command that Moses, the servant of the Lord, gave you.

After he said, The Lord your God will give you rest by giving you this land. Your wives, your children, and your livestock may stay in the land that Moses gave you east of the Jordan, but all your fighting men ready for battle must cross over ahead of your fellow Israelites.

[3 : 34] You are helping them until the Lord gives them rest, as he has done for you, and until they too have taken possession of the land that the Lord your God is giving them. After that you may go back and occupy your own land, which Moses, the servant of the Lord, gave you east of the Jordan toward the sunrise.

Then they answered Joshua, 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. Only may the Lord your

God be with you, as he was with Moses.

Whoever rebels against your word and does not obey it, whatever you may command them, will be put to death. Only be strong and courageous. This is the word of the Lord.

So as we begin in Joshua 1, we are going to meet Joshua as God's chosen leader.

This week, all over the news, we have seen tragic scenes at the Capitol building, haven't we?

We've seen a painful transition of leadership.

[4 : 44] Fear on the one hand. Anger on the other hand have been very evident. Divided loyalties pointing to perhaps towards deep divisions within a nation that's been so sad to watch.

I wonder, on a lesser scale, have you ever found yourself unsettled by leadership changes?

Perhaps in a classroom setting, a new teacher introduced with a different way of working.

Perhaps in your workplace, a different boss or project manager with different views and a different leadership style. Even in church, a change of ministry can become unsettling, perhaps.

And those leadership changes are made even more difficult when they come at critical moments or when they come during a time of crisis. So it's one thing having a teacher change, but it's quite another when that change happens during an important exam year.

Changing a boss is one thing, but if you're working on a project and it's near completion and new management is introduced, that can add layers of complexity.

[5 : 58] And of course, any kind of change during a pandemic is so difficult to manage. We put ourselves in Israel's shoes for a moment.

Israel has been led by Moses for over 40 years. And remember, the book of Joshua begins with a funeral. It begins after the death of Moses.

Moses, who was called by God, who was sent to Egypt, who led the people out of slavery, led them through the Red Sea, led them in the wilderness towards God to establish covenant with the people.

He has now died. They are within sight of the promised land, just over the Jordan River. And that both speaks to them of hope and fulfilment, but also speaks of danger, because they've already discovered there are spies and there are giants and there are fortified cities.

So when we reflect for a moment, perhaps we can imagine some of the fear, some of the questions.

We can imagine that some in Israel may have been daunted by the task at hand.

[7 : 07] And certainly Joshua seems to have been daunted by the task facing him. Well, what becomes clear in the book of Joshua, chapter one, is that God is in charge.

God speaks and God in mercy chooses his new leader to continue his plan of redemption. He then sets out qualities for that new leader, Joshua, to follow.

And he also makes it plain that God's people are to follow God's leader. Now, for us today, I'm sure the connection to Israel is not that difficult to make.

We, many times, I imagine, have felt unsettled. A sense of our own weakness, daunted by what's ahead. But we, too, have that same call to follow, in our case, Jesus, God's chosen king.

As we stand on the edge of an uncertain future, we are called to live by trusting and obeying Jesus.

[8 : 15] Trusting that God will be with us. Ultimately, God will take us home to our promised land. And to recognise that Jesus is the better Joshua. He is God who saves.

Because he is God and he has come as our saviour. So let's pick up our Bibles and let's look at what we discover about God's chosen leader in verses one to six.

So again, back to verse one. After the death of Moses, the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua. So into this potential power vacuum, where his dominant figure has been removed from the scene of time, God speaks.

And it's important that Joshua understand and the people understand that whereas Moses has died, God's promises, God's power, God's plans have not.

God's voice comes as the answer to Joshua's fears. God's word is the answer to our fears. Three promises are brought into view for Joshua.

[9 : 22] And the one hope that binds them all together is none other than God himself. The first promise is all about a place. We go to verse two.

Moses, my servant, is dead. Now that you and all these people get ready to cross the river Jordan into the land I am about to give to them. And then the details of the extent of that territory are laid out.

And then in verse six, be strong and courageous because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their ancestors to give them. So this land is God's gift to them.

This land is their inheritance from God. The promised land belongs to God and he wants to give it to his own people. This land had been promised to Abraham.

You can read Genesis 12 and 15 and see those promises made that Abraham, his family would become a nation and that nation would enter into Canaan and it would be the promised land for them.

[10:20] We can see that promise repeated to Moses as he is called by God to go to set the people free from slavery in Egypt. They were to be set free in order that they would enjoy life with God in the promised land.

The difference of time between Abraham and Joshua is maybe about 500 years, but that promise of God holds true. And so Joshua is going to be the leader who will take Israel into that land, which is both a gift and an inheritance from God.

So he reminds Joshua of the promise of a place, but he also promises his powerful protection in verse five.

No one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life. Now we need to bear in mind that Israel is a small nation, not a superpower. It has no formal standing army.

It has had very little experience of battle. When spies were sent over the Jordan into the promised land, they came back and 10 of them were fearful.

[11:32] There be giants, they said. But here, God reminds Joshua, he is a warrior for them.

He is the commander in chief for them. And they have evidence to look back on. The 10 plagues in the story of the Exodus, showing that God was much greater than the gods of Egypt.

The parting of the Red Sea to let his people go across. The fact that they were provided for in the wilderness for 40 years. So they always had water, they always had food and their clothes didn't run out.

And in their more recent history, they've defeated the kings of Sion and Og. And so Joshua is being encouraged that he as leader will see kings and nations fall in line with God's covenant promise, because God will fight for his people.

And then there is this third promise. And it's the promise of God's presence. End of verse 5.

[12:37] As I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will never leave you nor forsake you. Now Joshua, when we look at the story of his life to date, we see him as a warrior in the army.

We see him chosen as Moses' assistant. We see him acting as a faithful spy, saying God will give them the land. We see that he is appointed to succeed Moses.

But we also see he is someone who is nervous and afraid. And it says no wonder, I mean, Moses' shoes are big shoes to fall, to step into.

And what a gift, verse 5 then, is to Joshua. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you. How was God with Moses? Well, God revealed himself and revealed his truth and revealed his glory to Moses. Moses. Moses enjoyed communion with God. God spoke to Moses, the Bible says, as a man talks with his friend.

[13:44] And God gave guidance and wisdom to Moses. And these realities that Joshua would need would be his. That's the promise. And God says, never will I leave you, never will I forsake you.

You're not going in there alone. You're not going in, Joshua, on your own strength. Rather, as God's leader, he would know the I am God who is with him.

Speaking comfort to his anxious heart. Just as Jesus did with his disciples. In human terms, we can think, I am sure, of particularly high profile, well-established leaders.

Where succeeding that person, it seemed like you were almost destined to fail. To take that job would be the poison chalice. They spoke of that a lot with Alex Ferguson at Man United.

Still do, in fact. Or we might think about Steve Jobs at Apple. A couple of examples. Would that be true for Joshua? Following on from Moses?

[14:53] No. Because in God's kingdom, it's all about God and not us. It's all about God's plans. God's strength. God's will. And God's chosen leader.

Now, there's some important lessons that we can learn for ourselves. And the first is this. Right from the beginning, we see that God speaks to make clear who he has chosen to continue the plan of redemption.

It had been Moses. Now it would be Joshua. And ultimately, he will speak so clearly to announce to the world, Jesus is my chosen king. We see it at his baptism, where the voice from heaven speaks, this is my son who I love.

At the transfiguration, Jesus shines with the glory of God and the disciples are told, this is my son and you need to listen to him. He is revealed to us as God's chosen king in so many ways. Paul in 2 Corinthians 1 says, all the promises of God are yes and amen in Jesus. So secondly, we need to recognise that the great promises God makes here are promises that are fulfilled in Jesus. [16:07] God promises his people a place. Jesus comes and he says to his disciples, in my father's house are many rooms. I am going to prepare a place for you and I'll come back and take you to be with me so that you might be where I am.

Our place is eternal glory in heaven with Jesus. Jesus. The promise of protection. What becomes clear is that Jesus has come into the world to enter into spiritual battle on behalf of his people. Jesus has fought not physical but spiritual enemies, Satan and sin and death. And at the cross, he has won a decisive victory so that by faith in Jesus, our sin is forgiven. We're in the kingdom of God, not the kingdom of darkness. And we have the assurance that nothing now can separate us from the love of God. And what about that promise of presence? Jesus also said, I will never leave you. I will never forsake you. Jesus, having spoken the great commission to his disciples, said, I am with you always. [17:14] Even to the end of the age. A promise for the church in all times and all places, including for us. And a third lesson for us at this stage is to recognise that like Israel, we will be called to follow God's chosen leader who is Jesus.

Just like them, our circumstances might be changing and of course they're changing right now. But we follow and we trust an unchanging God who has unchanging purposes for our good. And so we are called to walk by faith, following Jesus as Lord. So having established that Joshua is his chosen leader, God then speaks to Joshua to set out for him, secondly, God's pattern for his leader.

So he's armed Joshua with rich promises. And now it becomes clear that he must live for God. And he must do that in two basic ways.

First of all, he must trust God. There is a repeating theme in chapter one that we see in different places throughout the book of Joshua. Be strong and courageous.

[18:29] Verse seven, be strong and very courageous. Now it's really important that we understand that Joshua is not being invited to put his trust in his own resolve and courage.

Rather, he is invited to consider the source of his trust. It's because of God's character and God's promise.

It's because God is present with him that he and we can be strong and courageous. We are weak, but he is strong.

In verse nine, he is reminded that as God's chosen leader, he must show faith and not fear.

Verse nine, have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid. Do not be discouraged. For the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.

[19:31] So that command to be strong and courageous is sandwiched by, I will be with you wherever you go. I have commanded you.

The temptation for Joshua and the temptation for us when we face daunting times is to change our perspective, to change what we look at and focus on.

So we look around at circumstances. For Joshua, he may have looked at the Jordan River and thought, how are we going to get across safely? He may have looked at the enemies. He'd seen them. There's giants.

There's fortified cities. He may have looked at the relative size of Israel compared to the great nations that they were going to do battle in. He could have looked around. We can look around at our circumstances so that we end up not with faith, but with fear.

There's also that temptation to look in, to think, hang on a minute. I'm not Moses. I'm no Moses.

How on earth can I do what God is asking me to do? And maybe we have that.

[20:32] We feel like we're being tested beyond our capacities. And instead of that being a cause for displaying God's glory and his grace and strength in our weakness, we just give in to fear.

We're being reminded, where does faith look? It doesn't look around. It doesn't look in. Faith looks up. It looks up to our God and to our Saviour.

So God's leader is called to trust in God and called, secondly and importantly, to obey God. Priority number one for Joshua as leader is to keep, to obey, to live by God's word.

We see that in verse 7 and 8. Be careful to obey all the law. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you. Do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go.

Keep this book of the law always on your lips. Meditate on it day and night so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. This book of the law was a covenant document.

[21 : 41] God had entered into a covenant, a relationship with his people by his grace and goodness, not because of their merit. And God is saying that he would be faithful to his side of the covenant, but that Joshua and Israel, they had a choice to make.

It was clearly laid out within the covenant. If you choose to obey, you will enjoy God's blessing. If you choose to disobey, you will experience God's curse. And so Joshua, as leader of the people, was to commit to obeying the book of the law.

Not turning from it, but being careful to keep all of it. Total obedience, not optional, not when it was convenient. That's what obedience looks like.

He's told, keep it on your lips. Be reading God's word. Be listening to God's word. Be sharing the truth of God's word with others.

Meditate on God's word. What does that mean? It doesn't mean to empty one's mind. It means to fill one's mind with God's truth. To chew it over. To reflect on it so it becomes internalised.

[22 : 50] We might do that by writing a verse down or trying to memorise. Or picking out key words and reflecting on them and certainly turning it to prayer.

But the message is God's leader must obey God's law and God's will with all his heart. Now remember, this is Joshua being spoken to as leader of the people of God, leader for Israel.

He is intended to be an example for all to follow. And remember, Joshua is also prophet. So he's preaching this. He's saying, listen, this is what God has taught me.

I must trust him and I must obey him. People of God, we must do the same. It's like family values. We know how that works, don't we? Parents aim to model.

We know we do this imperfectly, but we aim to model how children should live. Especially as Christian parents, we look to show how God's word should influence all of life.

[23 : 52] How the gospel should give hope and life and joy and love to our children. It's true, it's true, it's true, it's true. It's true, the shared values of any group that they are passed down and that we can also learn by a process of imitation.

That brings us to two really crucial truths for us to understand. One, Joshua is the pattern for all Christian leaders.

That in whatever our role, our responsibility of leadership, we lead others in this way. We do it as we trust in God and as we are led by God's word and as we look to be faithful in obeying God's word.

So if you're a leader in your workplace, you go there trusting God. You look to have the values of God's word determining how you go about your business.

Husbands, this is a call to show spiritual leadership in our homes. Parents, this is a call to us as leaders of our children.

[25 : 22] That we want to show them what it looks like to trust in God. We want to show them the value of God's word by reading it with them. By reflecting on its truth with them, by seeking to show Jesus and the gospel from the stories and the poetry, from the letters that are found in there.

Church leaders, in whatever level, we do that trusting in God, being directed by the word of God. If you're a leader of any kind, this is your most basic and fundamental blueprint for leadership.

As Christians, we are to trust God and we are to be led by God's word as we go out to lead others. And the second vital thing for us to recognise is that Jesus, as God's chosen king, perfectly models trust and obedience.

Because when we are honest, it doesn't take us too long in our past to recognise how often, sometimes how badly we fail. But not Jesus.

Jesus kept God's law absolutely. Jesus resisted the most fierce temptation and never gave in to sin.

[26 : 48] Jesus showed total commitment and determination to do God's will in God's way. And that led him to the cross because he'd come to die in our place for our sins, to be our saviour.

And crucial for the good news is that Jesus is the one leader, the one king who perfectly obeys.

Because Jesus came as our substitute. So where we fail and where we break God's law in our thoughts, our words, our actions, Jesus always succeeded.

So the demands of the law have been met. But Jesus also, as our substitute, takes the curse for a broken law that we should pay on himself at the cross.

Jesus suffers and dies in our place for our sins, satisfying the justice of God for a broken law. But showing us the love of God and that God himself pays the price so that we, by trusting in Jesus, by faith in Jesus, we can receive all the blessings of life in fellowship and covenant with our God.

[28 : 06] So on our pilgrimage, as we live as exiles, whether we're leaders or not, we trust in our perfect king and saviour, Jesus.

And we choose faith and obedience as the tracks that our lives will follow. One last thing to draw our attention to.

And this time the story shifts focus. Attention is now on Israel's response. Because the third thing I want us to see is obeying God's chosen leader.

We see the people obeying. Attention focuses in verse 10 to 18 on Israel, but especially on the two and a half tribes who have already received an allotment of land.

They're already settled and secure. And the question is, how will they react to Joshua as leader?

Representing the people, how will they respond? Will we see power plays?

[29 : 10] Will we see a clash of personalities? Will there be hostility or will there be a smooth transition?

So God's plan will continue. We see Joshua acting as a ruler in verse 10.

So Joshua ordered the officers of the people go through the camp and tell the people, get your provisions ready because they were going to go over the Jordan in three days. And then in verse 12 to 15, there's a special order for this two and a half tribes who are already settled.

They're told, get ready to fight, to help the rest of the people so that everyone might enjoy God's rest. They might have the joy of being God's people in God's place, under God's rule and enjoying God's blessing, as Vaughan Roberts puts it so helpfully.

How will they react? And the good news is, verse 16, they answered Joshua, whatever you have commanded us, we will do. And wherever you send us, we will go.

[30 : 21] We will obey your command. They recognize God's chosen leader and they're going to show full loyalty to him. Verse 17, just as we fully obeyed Moses, so we will obey you only.

May the Lord your God be with you as he was with Moses. They desire the best for him and the best that a leader can know is to know God with them. One last verse, and it's a really striking verse.

These tribes, they say, whoever rebels against your word and does not obey it, whatever you may command them will be put to death. Only be strong and courageous.

In other words, choosing to honor and to obey God's chosen leader is no small thing. Rather, it's a life or death thing.

To follow Joshua as leader will bring life and rest in the promised land. But to rebel will bring death as judgment.

[31 : 22] So chapter one concludes, showing Joshua has been clearly appointed as God's leader. And the people are clear that they must obey.

In our setting, Jesus has for us clearly been demonstrated to be God's chosen king. At his baptism, at the transfiguration, in his resurrection.

Ascension, risen as God's king with power. Seated at the right hand of God at his ascension, now ruling and reigning until his return.

Jesus is God's ruling, reigning, returning one day king. And so the challenge for Israel becomes the challenge to ourselves.

Are we submitting, submitting fully and submitting gladly to Jesus as our king? Showing undivided loyalty.

[32 : 29] Following his word. Because we're reminded how serious an issue this is. Responding to Jesus is a life or death choice.

Eternity is at stake. Heaven and hell are at stake. Jesus must be our Lord. We must follow his ways.

Trusting in his saving work for us. To redeem us. And to bring us. To anticipate. To have hope in.

And to be found in. Our. Promised Land. Ideal to be found in. Undernat distortion. Geoled to Feat boom in. If we apostate in.

We must follow his findings. To be found in. Christian. Visto. prices required to be found in.
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