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What's the Point....of Joshua?

Mark Garner

In Joshua, we see God's frequent reminders that he will be with them, wherever they go, as he gives them his simple call to walk by faith. On one level, the book describes how God leads the Israelites into Canaan as he overcomes obstacles for them. It also holds several parallels for our walk with our Heavenly Father through Jesus.

Wherever You Go (Overview Of Joshua)

Throughout the book, God often reassures Joshua that wherever he goes, God will be with him and the people; this promise is repeatedly fulfilled, as we also see their dependence on God's grace and his presence. The first step is to take the Israelites across the Jordan (Joshua 1-5). On a practical level, this was a significant obstacle, and on a spiritual level it also called them to leave behind the barren yet familiar desert, and to move into a new, better land yet with new obstacles.

This has spiritual parallels in our own walk of faith as well, as does God's promise to Joshua to be with us. Before they cross the Jordan, we see an example of how God can do many things in a single sequence of events. As God reminds Israel to have faith in him, we also see Rahab's walk of faith (Joshua 2). Not only was it a gift of grace to the scouts for God to lead them to her, but even more it was a gift of grace to Rahab. In the whole city of Jericho, God saw one seeking heart.

Next, as God enables them to cross the river on dry ground (Joshua 3), he asks them to pick some stones from the riverbed, and set them up at Gilgal (Joshua 4). They celebrate the Passover; and then from that time the manna stops, as from then on they eat the crops of Canaan.

Upon entering the new land (Joshua 6-12), they must first face the imposing walls of Jericho. God instructs them to walk around the city over and over, for them to reflect on their own weakness and the city's strength, so that they can see that only God could give them the victory. We also see some contrasts between human weakness and God's faithfulness (as in what happens at Jericho and Ai in Joshua 7-8, and with the Gibeonites in Joshua 9-10).

Then inheritances for everyone are allocated (Joshua 13-21), while our inheritance is imperishable, and there is more than enough to give each of us all that we need. As the Lord's promises are fulfilled to Israel, God made even better promises to us that are fulfilled in Jesus. The book finishes with a call to walk by faith (Joshua 22-24), as Joshua reminds them again of all that God has done for them, how he delivered them, and gave them many blessings both physical and spiritual.

Overall Thoughts

Just as Joshua had reminded the Israelites long ago, our Heavenly Father calls us to fix our eyes on Jesus, and to set aside this world's hindrances, its false hopes, and its empty reasoning. As we fix our eyes on Jesus, we can contemplate his glory and his compassion and all that he endured to bring us the grace we need and to give us lasting hope in him.

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What's the Point....of Joshua? Caleb Dillinger

Joshua, the sixth book of the Bible, tells the story of Israel's conquest of Canaan under the leadership of Joshua, the protégé of Moses who became the leader of the nation after Moses died. Two key characters for the rest of the Biblical narrative are introduced and developed in this book: Joshua and Rahab.

Understandably, Joshua is at the forefront of the book of the Bible that received his name. But did you know Joshua is a Hebrew name (יְהוֹשֻׁעַ) that translates into Greek as Ἰησοῦς which translates into English as Jesus. Yes....Jesus was not called Jesus in the Bible. He was called Joshua. And for one more fun fact - the three main letters that compose the name "Joshua" in Hebrew are the three main letters that compose the word "Salvation."

Is it a coincidence that Joshua led God's people into the promised land, and then hundreds of years later a man named Joshua was born of a virgin and led God's people into an eternal promised land? I doubt it. I think God knew exactly why he named Jesus "Joshua".

Rahab, a minor character in this book of the Bible, plays an important role in the grand scheme of the Bible story. She will be an ancestor to King David, and consequently an ancestor to Jesus! Rahab, a prostitute, a liar who betrays her country to protect the Israelites, is going to be a grand matriarch for the most important human ancestry lines ever.

So what's the point of slogging through this 24 chapter book of the Bible filled with hundreds of names and places? Well, it certainly will help you understand the significance of Rahab being mentioned in Matthew, Hebrews, and James. And it will help you appreciate how difficult leadership is! Many of the Old Testament books of the Bible will reflect the challenge of spiritual leadership, but Joshua uniquely presents the hardships of a new leader, without his mentor, trying to lead a stubborn people to follow God. It's entirely understandable why God has to repeat this message to Joshua four times: be strong and courageous. (Interestingly, Joshua repeats this message from God to the people of Israel in chapter 10, a demonstration of God impacting leaders, and then leaders impacting followers).

Joshua is worth reading, not just for historical information but for miracles and awe inspiring stories. At least three significant miracles occur in the book - from crossing water on dry land (again!), to walls falling down untouched, to the sun standing still! And if you happen to have a study Bible handy, you'll find all sorts of interesting notes from scholars about why all these names and places mentioned in the second half of the book are significant.

I know Old Testament stories, especially with such heavy doses of Hebrew words, are considered challenging. But this is one of those books of the Bible that gives you insight into the namesake for our Lord and Savior Jesus, that explains the complexity of spiritual leadership, and that challenges all readers to "choose this day whom they will serve." The Israelites end up

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choosing other gods...and that leads to their downfall. But to learn about that, you'll have to read the next book: Judges.