

Having just preached on Esther – it seemed appropriate to go back to the book of Joshua.

Esther deals with the OT people of God in their final state before the incarnation (diaspora).  
Joshua contains all the things that Esther is lacking.

Joshua is all about the inheritance –

In Exodus, God had said, “Israel is my son, my firstborn,”  
and then he brought them through the wilderness to Sinai –  
and at Pentecost he gave them the Law,  
and poured out his Holy Spirit upon them  
(the glory cloud that left Sinai and filled the Tabernacle);  
now he gives his son his inheritance.

Joshua begins – “After the death of Moses...”

Deuteronomy ends with the death of Moses.

But Moses’ work is only half finished.  
He has brought Israel out of Egypt,  
but he has not yet brought them into the land flowing with milk and honey  
(Ex. 3:8)

The promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob has not yet been fulfilled.  
The children of Israel have not yet received their inheritance.

In the last chapters of Deuteronomy

we hear both the promise and warning (the two sides of the covenant)

God promises that he will bring the people into the land and give them an inheritance.  
Joshua is the fulfillment of the promise of Deuteronomy.

But God also warns that if Israel fails, he will judge them with the curses of Egypt.  
Judges is the fulfillment of the warnings!  
(Though even within Joshua there are clear signals that the unconditional promise  
is still conditioned on faithfulness.)

You might wonder – how can an unconditional promise have conditions?!

Some commentators have seen a tension between the rosy picture of the conquest–

God was with Israel and they defeated all their enemies–  
and the occasional glimpses in Joshua of the incomplete work of the conquest.

Liberals have proposed a solution:

They say Joshua was composed by different authors with opposing theological visions.

But the tension in Joshua is not rooted in contradictory texts  
but in the two sides of the covenant.

In Joshua we have a unified narrative that is deeply rooted in the tension already stated in Dt.  
between covenant faithfulness and rebellion.

“The dynamics that would eventually lead to exile are already in place in Joshua”  
(as we will see at Jericho and again at Ai).

Not surprisingly, covenant is a central theological theme in Joshua,  
and not surprisingly, so is inheritance.

Joshua is a crystal clear example of the interrelation of covenant and sonship—  
how the covenant is defined in filial language.

Other themes that we will touch upon include  
Leadership (Dt 17 and Joshua—later Gideon and Abimelech)  
along with Holy War, and the Unity of Israel.

There are four parts to the book of Joshua –  
which can be summarized by the primary verb used in each of the sections:

“Going over” (1:1-5:12) abar -- used 29 times in the first 5 chapters (29 times in the next 19 chapters)

“Taking” possession (5:13-12:24) laqach – used 13 times in these 7 chapters (9 times in the other 17)

“Dividing the land (13:1-21:45) chalaq – used 6 times in these 9 chapters (once elsewhere)

“Worshipping” (22:1-24:33) abad – used 20 times in these three chapters (once elsewhere)

Brief note on authorship and date:

No author is named.

No date is stated.

The basic structure almost certainly predates the writing of the book of Judges

The context of Judges suggests a Davidic date.

The language of “to this day” suggests some distance from the events  
(4:9; 5:9; 6:25; 7:26, etc.)

But it must be read as a part of the whole narrative from Joshua through Josiah.

It is likely that an Exilic editor brought Joshua-Judges together with Samuel-Kings

We often call these books “historical” books – and they are histories!

But previous generations referred to them as “the former prophets.”

Because these stories were not written down merely as chronicles.

They were written down as *sermons* –

they were written down

so that we might remember the mighty deeds of God,  
and learn to walk in the ways of the LORD.

## 1. Joshua and Moses

Joshua begins with the words, “After the death of Moses....”

making it clear that the author expects that the reader has already read Deuteronomy.

Chapter 1 of Joshua serves as a bridge backwards.

How could you know about “the book of the law” if you don’t know the Pentateuch?

So Joshua should be considered the sequel of Deuteronomy.

(Judges will begin with the words, “After the death of Joshua...”

making it clear that Judges should be considered the sequel of Joshua).

But it is useful for us to consider this connection more carefully.

Joshua is identified as “the son of Nun, Moses’ assistant.”

We first meet Joshua in Exodus 17:9-10 as the general who leads the people in battle,  
as Moses holds the staff of God over the field of battle.

So, from the start, Joshua is the one who leads the armies in the field.

Indeed, in Exodus 17:14, after the victory God declares,

“Write this as a memorial in a book and recite it in the ears of Joshua,  
that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven.”

Joshua is to learn that God accomplishes what he promises.

(Now, think about that in light of our series on Esther –

Haman, the Agagite, was the descendant of Agag – the Amalekite king!

But God’s decree was against the Amalekites

because Amalek had sought to ambush the people of God.)

Also, in Ex 24:13, we are told that Moses took Joshua with him up the mountain,

and in 33:11 we hear that when Moses returned to the camp

from the tent of meeting, Joshua would remain in the tent.

Plainly, Joshua was being prepared for service as Moses’ successor.

(And there is an interesting parallel between Joshua’s devotion to the tent of God  
and Jesus’ devotion to the house of God even in his youth.)

In Numbers 13-14 Joshua is one of the 12 spies that scouted the land–

and one of only two that believed God’s promises

and called the people to faithful obedience.

In Numbers 27, God declares that Moses will not lead the people into the land,

due to his sin,

but that Joshua will be the one who leads the people.

Joshua is described as “a man in whom is the Spirit,”

and Moses lays hands on him and commissions him,

investing him with Moses’ own authority,

so that Israel might follow Joshua as well.

Deuteronomy 31 then recounts the commissioning of Joshua.

Read 31:1-8

*So Moses continued to speak these words to all Israel. <sup>2</sup> And he said to them, “I am 120 years old today. I am no longer able to go out and come in. The LORD has said to me, ‘You shall not go over this Jordan.’ <sup>3</sup> The LORD your God himself will go over before you. He will destroy these nations before you, so that you shall dispossess them, and Joshua will go over at your head, as the LORD has spoken. <sup>4</sup> And the LORD will do to them as he did to Sihon and Og, the kings of the Amorites, and to their land, when he destroyed them. <sup>5</sup> And the LORD will give them over to you, and you shall do to them according to the whole commandment that I have commanded you. <sup>6</sup> Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the LORD your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you.”*

*<sup>7</sup> Then Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, “Be strong and courageous, for you shall go with this people into the land that the LORD has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall put them in possession of it. <sup>8</sup> It is the LORD who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.”*

Verse 23 even speaks of Yahweh’s own commission to Joshua:  
*And the LORD<sup>[a]</sup> commissioned Joshua the son of Nun and said, “Be strong and courageous, for you shall bring the people of Israel into the land that I swore to give them. I will be with you.”*

Then after God teaches Moses the song of chapter 32,  
we hear in 32:45-47.

*<sup>44</sup> Moses came and recited all the words of this song in the hearing of the people, he and Joshua<sup>[a]</sup> the son of Nun. <sup>45</sup> And when Moses had finished speaking all these words to all Israel, <sup>46</sup> he said to them, “Take to heart all the words by which I am warning you today, that you may command them to your children, that they may be careful to do all the words of this law. <sup>47</sup> For it is no empty word for you, but your very life, and by this word you shall live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess.”*

Notice the repetition: “be strong and courageous.”

Some people have thought that Joshua had a personality trait,  
leading him to be bashful or timid.

There is nothing in the text that suggests that.

On the contrary, he speaks boldly and forcefully in Numbers 14,  
and had led the people into battle in his youth, 40 years before, in Ex 17.

Rather than read this psychologically, look at it redemptive-historically.

Remember what you have seen.

Because the day is coming when Moses will no longer be there.

But not just Moses!

The pillar of cloud and fire will no longer go before you.

The manna—the bread from heaven—will no longer appear with the dew.

God spoke to Moses face to face,

but he will only speak to Joshua through the Urim and Thummim.

And yet while you will no longer have these outward manifestations of God's presence,  
that does not mean that God is absent.  
No, indeed, God will still go before you.  
Therefore, be strong and courageous.

Further, Joshua is going to face perils that Moses never did.  
Moses spent 40 years wandering in the wilderness,  
but only a few times did Israel go into battle.  
Now they are going against nations mightier than they.  
In Numbers 14, Joshua had said, let us not fear the nations!  
Now the LORD speaks to Joshua and says, (1:2-5).

*After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, <sup>2</sup> "Moses my servant is dead. Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel. <sup>3</sup> Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses. <sup>4</sup> From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun shall be your territory. <sup>5</sup> No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you.*

I should explain that the "you" in verse 3 is plural.  
Wherever Israel's feet tread, God will give them the land –  
from the Euphrates to the Wilderness.  
But then in verse 5, it switches over to a you singular!

No man will stand before Joshua.  
Because Joshua has a unique relationship to God.  
He is God's chosen servant – the LORD's anointed:

## **2. Joshua and the Law**

Therefore,  
<sup>6</sup> *Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them.*

Joshua will cause Israel to inherit the land that I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob!  
And a second time, God repeats these words, "Only be strong and very courageous,"

<sup>7</sup> *Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success<sup>[a]</sup> wherever you go. <sup>8</sup> This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. <sup>9</sup> Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be*

*dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.*”

This is not merely a courage in the face of military enemies.

Indeed, armies are a very minor part of the dangers that Israel faces.

Their greatest enemy will always be themselves!

Therefore, “be careful to do according to all the law  
that Moses my servant commanded you.”

Taking possession of the land will depend upon *his* faithfulness to God’s word.

Joshua’s faithfulness.

Because this is not a command to Israel.

God is *not* saying that Israel’s taking possession of the land depends upon *their*  
faithfulness.

It is not “you” plural.

It is “you” singular.

You, Joshua, must be careful to do all that Moses commanded you!

You, Joshua, shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers.

Not Israel.

Not Moses.

Not some sovereign interposition of God apart from means.

You.

If Joshua fails, then Israel will not receive their inheritance.

If Joshua turns aside to the right or to the left,  
then all the promises of God fall to the ground!

I don’t care if Joshua was the boldest, most confident man who ever lived!

To know that the inheritance of the people of God depends solely on you  
is not something that any mortal could take lightly.

Joshua’s great namesake—the one who was both human and divine—  
trembled when he came to the final test as well.

And yet God declares, “Have I not commanded you?”

(You can almost hear Joshua’s silent reply:

“Command what you will, O God, and give what you command!”

Perhaps Augustine was the first to use those words,  
but surely he was not the first to think them!!)

But that is precisely what God assures Joshua:

“Be strong and courageous.

Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed,  
for Yahweh your God is with you wherever you go.”

What had Joshua learned in his first battle in Exodus 17?

God will go with our armies if we have a righteous leader.

Why had Joshua been left in the tent with the glory of God?

Why had the Spirit come upon Moses' young assistant 40 years before?  
Now he knows.  
Only a Spirit-filled man who walks in the law of Moses faithfully  
can bring the people of God into their inheritance.

And so, filled with the Spirit, commissioned by God at the Jordan River  
by the hand of God's anointed servant,  
he comes and speaks to the people.

You'd almost think we were talking about a guy named Jesus.

Oh, that's right.

We are. (Jesus is simply the Greek spelling of Joshua.)

### **3. Joshua and the People (Inheritance)**

*<sup>10</sup> And Joshua commanded the officers of the people, <sup>11</sup> "Pass through the midst of the camp and command the people, 'Prepare your provisions, for within three days you are to pass over this Jordan to go in to take possession of the land that the LORD your God is giving you to possess.'"*

In verse 10, then Joshua comes to the officers and brings word to break camp and set forth.  
In three days, the people of God will cross over the Jordan in order to take possession.

The time is come.  
The kingdom of God is at hand.  
Will you believe the gospel – the good news,  
that God has finally done what he has promised 500 years ago...

In verse 12, we hear that Joshua speaks  
to the two and a half tribes who had settled there on the east bank of the Jordan,  
Joshua reminds them of the pledge they had given to Moses,  
to assist in the conquest of the land,

*<sup>12</sup> And to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh Joshua said, <sup>13</sup> "Remember the word that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, saying, 'The LORD your God is providing you a place of rest and will give you this land.' <sup>14</sup> Your wives, your little ones, and your livestock shall remain in the land that Moses gave you beyond the Jordan, but all the men of valor among you shall pass over armed before your brothers and shall help them, <sup>15</sup> until the LORD gives rest to your brothers as he has to you, and they also take possession of the land that the LORD your God is giving them. Then you shall return to the land of your possession and shall possess it, the land that Moses the servant of the LORD gave you beyond the Jordan toward the sunrise."*

In Deuteronomy these two and a half tribes

had asked for an inheritance on the east side of the Jordan.  
God had replied in the affirmative –  
but only after requiring them to help their brothers in the conquest of the land.

It was only fair.

All Israel helped Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh  
in their battles against Og king of Bashan, and Sihon king of the Amorites.  
So now it is only fair for them to help their brothers.

Is Israel really *one* people?

Or are they twelve different groups?

Or is there some other division?

Will the people of God fragment into parties/factions/denominations...?

(This theme will return at the end of the book of Joshua –  
where the theme of worship threatens to divide them!  
Good thing that doesn't happen these days!)

But notice their response:

<sup>16</sup> *And they answered Joshua, "All that you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. <sup>17</sup> Just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you.*

Some of you may not be too impressed by that promise.

You may recall the wilderness wanderings,  
where Israel was famous for their grumbling and complaining–  
their constant rebellion against Moses!

But remember that God's judgment had already fallen against that generation.  
They have all died in the wilderness.

These are their children–those who watched their parents die in the wilderness.  
But they have remained faithful to Yahweh, and obeyed the voice of Moses.

These people are telling the truth.

They *have* obeyed Moses –  
even if it meant turning their backs on their parents.

This doesn't mean that they were sinless.

It simply means that *with respect to* the covenant promise,  
they had kept walking in the right direction.

They trusted God to bring them into the promised land –  
and so they did not rebel and try to go back to Egypt;  
they may have had all sorts of doubts and fears –  
but when Joshua said "it's time" –  
they showed up!



(By the way, it is in this respect  
that *you* are a delightfully faithful congregation of Jesus Christ!  
When you see that something is needful to follow Jesus well,  
you do it!  
It's not that everyone does everything right!  
But as a whole, when something needs to happen, you do it.  
As I consider all that I have heard and seen over the years in other churches,  
I am grateful to God for *your faithfulness!*)

But then notice how the congregation responds to Joshua (end of v17):

*Only may the LORD your God be with you, as he was with Moses!*

They understand quite well that the inheritance depends upon Joshua.  
They need a faithful leader, one like Moses, who will lead them in the way of the LORD.  
Therefore they promise to obey Joshua,  
urging him to be strong and courageous,  
because they know that their salvation depends not upon themselves,  
but upon the LORD's Anointed who goes before them.

And so they declare that rebellion against Joshua is a capital offense:

<sup>18</sup> *Whoever rebels against your commandment and disobeys your words, whatever you command him, shall be put to death.*

Because Joshua is Jesus.  
Joshua is the LORD's anointed – the one who will go before them –  
*his faithfulness* will result in *their inheritance*.

Just to be clear – in the parallel to our day,  
I am one of the anonymous officers who responds to Joshua!  
Joshua is Jesus.

He is the head of the church – and *his word* is law.

And so the officers say to Joshua:

*Only be strong and courageous.*”

Because if you, Joshua, are not strong and courageous,  
then we're not going to last long against these Canaanites!

Our hope is that Joshua will cause us to inherit the land!

Israel takes possession of the land by faith.

Insofar as “works” are involved – they are the works of Joshua.  
His work causes us to inherit.

They believe God’s promises and so they follow Jesus.

Hebrews 3-4 is perhaps the most famous usage of Joshua in the NT.  
and we’ll be looking at it from time to time throughout our study,  
but I’d like for you to consider a different NT parallel tonight.

1 Peter 1:3-5

*<sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, <sup>4</sup> to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, <sup>5</sup> who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

The resurrection of Jesus is the triumph of the new Joshua.  
Just as Joshua brought Israel into their inheritance  
by overthrowing the armies of Canaan,  
so Jesus brings us into our inheritance  
by overthrowing the principalities and powers,  
by destroying the power of sin, death and the devil,  
through his resurrection from the dead.

And, like with Hebrews 3-4,  
this time it is “an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading.”  
There is not going to be another exile!

Jesus is the faithful covenant keeper–  
the one who obeyed Moses perfectly–  
and through that obedience received the inheritance,  
and gives it to those who believe in him.

And because Jesus has been strong and courageous,  
and because he has demolished the foe,  
taking captivity itself captive–  
therefore we may rejoice and follow him cheerfully and obediently into battle,  
knowing that our enemies have already been cast down.

When you are tempted by sin, or discouraged by foes,  
remember, they have been overthrown.

By faith, remember that the Lord Joshua has already gone before you  
to bring you an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading.