

# The People Commission Joshua

## Introduction

### a. objectives

1. subject – the Israelite people commission Joshua as he assumes leadership over them
2. aim – to cause us to understand what it means for us to commission Jesus as our Lord
3. passage – Joshua 1:10-18

### b. outline

1. Joshua Commands the Western Tribes (Joshua 1:10-11)
2. Joshua Commands the Eastern Tribes (Joshua 1:12-15)
3. The People Commission Joshua (Joshua 1:16-18)

### c. opening

1. the **structure** of this pericope
  - a. now that Joshua has been commissioned by God, it is time for him to take the *mantle* of leadership
  - b. **i.e.** Joshua obeys God to “*arise*” (**v. 2**) and lead the people
  - c. so, this pericope is the *first acts* of Joshua to obey that commission (**i.e.** to follow Moses)
    1. he will first address the *western* tribes, he will then address the *eastern* tribes
    2. and then, the people *will address him* (**IMO**: the most important part of the pericope)

## I. Joshua Commands the Western Tribes (Joshua 1:10-11)

### Content

#### a. the command to the western tribes

1. **note**: Joshua speaks to the “*officers*” of the people = he speaks “through” the tribal leaders
2. the command (**ad hoc**) is “prepare, for in three days you will cross the Jordan into Canaan”
  - a. **why?** because it would take *more than 2 million* people *at least* that much time to get ready
    1. to pack their possessions, gather their flocks and herds, and prepare to travel *again*
    2. **IMO**: the number of Israelites has probably *grown* substantially over the past 40 years
    3. and ... during this 40 years, the people have gotten used to *not traveling much or far at a time*
      - a. **i.e.** it has taken 40 years to go ~250 mi. NE from Sinai (6 mi/year) – they were “used” to camping in places along the way for great stretches of time (**e.g.** a decade at a locale?)
  - b. **IOW**: Joshua gives them what should be a *reasonable* amount of time to pack and get ready
3. the command (**ad hoc**) is “you are about to take possession of the land promised you by God”
  - a. Joshua tells them they are about to do *now*, what their predecessors failed to do *then*
  - b. **i.e.** they are about to enter and take the land *that he (himself) said they could* (**Num. 14:6ff**)
  - c. **IOW**: the entire purpose of leaving Egypt 40 years ago (a promise to Abraham 600 years ago) is about to come to pass ... you are about to go and **take what is yours**
4. the command is given to the “western” tribes (**i.e.** 9½ of the total tribes of Israel)
  - a. which is *assumed*, based on the next statement, “*and to the Reubenites ... Joshua said*” ...

## II. Joshua Commands the Eastern Tribes (Joshua 1:12-15)

### Content

#### a. the history of the eastern tribes

1. God had originally intended that the land would be divided amongst the 12 sons of Jacob
  - a. but, God superintended the Levites to *not* be given a specific land, but to live *within* the boundaries of the other tribes, serving as helpers to the priests from the family of Aaron (**Numbers 18:20**)
  - b. and, God superintended the blessing of Joseph by Jacob with a double-inheritance (for keeping the family safe in Egypt;) by allotting land to his sons, Manasseh and Ephraim (**Genesis 48:5**)
  - c. thus, the two sons of Joseph “replaced” him and the Levites for inheritance
2. but ... when the Israelites arrived in Gilead (to the E of the Jordan, just before this time), the tribes of **Reuban and Gad** choose to settle in that place instead of taking land to the W (**Numbers 32**)
  - a. Moses perceived their request to be a **déjà vu all over again**: some of the people refusing to enter the land when God brings them to it (as in the days of the original spies 40 years earlier)

- b. but, the leaders of these two tribes promise that they will send their fighting men with the rest of Israel across the Jordan until the W tribes are settled; they will leave their families in fortified cities in the Transjordan, and cross the Jordan with the rest of the tribes to fight before them
- c. so, Moses accepts their request, but *solemnly warns them* that failure to take up arms and cross with the rest of Israel would mean their destruction – the leaders agree to these terms
  - 1. **note:** it is unknown *why* half of the tribe of Manasseh is included in this arrangement
  - 2. **note:** the fighting men of Reuban and Gad are able to return home once the **initial** conquest of the W is complete (**Joshua 13:8ff cf. 13:1-7**)
    - a. the Conquest under Joshua only establishes the W tribes in the hill country, along Canaan's central spine (**see Judges 1**) – the Conquest is *finally* completed in the days of David

#### b. the command to the eastern tribes

- 1. the command is simply a reminder of the “agreement” (**see above**)
  - a. the Lord has agreed to give you this land to the E of the Jordan
  - b. while your wives and children remain here, the “*men of valor*” amongst you are to come with us
    - 1. “*men of valor*” = those of fighting age (20-50; **e.g. Numbers 4**); implying that *some* men would remain behind to protect the wives and children of those who went with Joshua
  - c. you are to continue in the fight until the Lord gives “rest” to the W tribes
    - 1. **i.e.** until the W tribes are *sufficiently* settled, not forever (the **initial** conquest; **see above**)
  - d. then (and *only* then) will you be allowed to return to the land “*toward the sunrise*” (**i.e.** the E)
- 2. so, **Joshua assumes command** by giving his first set of orders to the people ...

### III. The People Commission Joshua (Joshua 1:16-18)

#### Content

##### a. the original title of this sermon

- 1. I had originally entitled this sermon “Joshua Assumes Command”, but ...
- 2. the last three (3) verses of the chapter are (**IMO**) the most significant in the pericope
  - a. true, the commands above are important, but **question:** why does Joshua include this (**vv. 16-18**) in the story, being written for a people *later in time* (**i.e.** those already in the land)
- 3. and, there is an interesting **parallel** between God's words to Joshua and the people's words to him
  - a. **i.e.** they *both* say to him “*be strong and courageous*” (**v. 18b cf. vv. 6, 9**)
- 4. **IMO:** the statement in **vv. 16-18** is a **commissioning of Joshua by the people**, just as much as God's words to Joshua commissioned him *first* (**i.e.** it is a *pledge of loyalty*)
  - a. but, it is more than a *pledge* ... it is a promise that *foreshadows* something ...
  - b. **their statement is four (4) promises and a request ...**

##### b. the people commission Joshua

- 1. they agree to obey him in everything he commands them to do (**v. 16a**)
  - a. **note:** although the statement *appears* to be specific to what he has *just* commanded them (to prepare), the second half clearly implies that they are pledging to obey him *from this point forward*
  - b. **eye roll:** yeah, just like you did when I originally told you that you could go into the land ...
- 2. they agree to be loyal to him just as they were loyal to Moses (**v. 17a**)
  - a. **IOW:** we *transfer* our pledge of loyalty from Moses to you – he is gone, and we will not “compare” you to him, but will follow *your* lead whatever *your* style might be
  - b. **eye roll #2:** yeah, you were so loyal to Moses – should I recount when you *grumbled* against him?
- 3. they agree to follow him as long as he follows Yahweh, just as God had led Moses (**v. 17b**)
  - a. **IOW:** we *admit* that Yahweh led Moses in the past, and we recognize that your leadership is *actually* Yahweh leading you – so we will follow you *as long as you obey the Lord*
- 4. they agree to make their allegiance to him a matter of life and death (**v. 18a**)
  - a. **IOW:** we are so strongly committing to your leadership, that we will actually *kill* anyone who disobeys you along the way (including *ourselves*)
  - b. **note:** this *will* actually happen shortly after the people cross into Canaan (**chap. 7**)
- 5. they commission him to be strong and courageous, to stand up and lead them (**v. 18b**)
  - a. **i.e.** just as God had said to him “*arise ... be strong,*” so the people now same the same: we will follow you *as long as you are strong and courageous before us*
  - b. **IOW:** Joshua must *model* courage before them, for they would need it
- 6. in the end, Joshua includes this passage to remind future generations of their need to remain faithful to this pledge, especially under *future leaders* God would raise up (**i.e.** the judges)
  - a. **so, this pledge is universal – it is “typical” (an example) for all future generations of those being led by men whom God would send ... including the Messiah ...**

### c. the elect commission Jesus

1. Joshua (**see previous lesson**) is a *type* of the Christ, a foreshadowing of his role in leading a people
  - a. so, how does this commissioning of Joshua *by the people* foreshadow Christ?
  - b. **answer: when we, the elect (the people of Yahweh), come to Christ by faith, we also “commission” him to lead us in the same way Israel commissioned Joshua to lead them**
2. **IOW:** we say *to Jesus* the same things the people said to Joshua (**in this paragraph**):
  - a. we agree to obey him in everything he commands us to do and everywhere he sends us
    1. **e.g.** in the Great Commission, which is given *to every follower of Christ (i.e. “go”)*
    2. **IMO:** there is far too much preaching in the church today that treats “salvation” as simply a nod-and-a-wink to Christ – **i.e.** very little call to allegiance and obedience *at the heart of the gospel*
  - b. we agree to put all *previous* allegiances away to be loyal only to him
    1. just as the Israelites turn from Moses, we agree to put away all previous allegiances before him as Lord, *including our sin (to repent)*
    2. **i.e.** we profess allegiance as we “*confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord*” (**Romans 10:9**)
  - c. we agree to follow him because we recognize him *as Yahweh*
    1. just as the Israelites recognized the presence and activity of *Yahweh* in Moses, so we come to Christ fully recognizing that *he himself is* Yahweh
    2. **i.e.** our trust in Christ as Savior is based on a conviction that *he alone* can lead us to the Father
      - a. that it takes a work *of God himself* to truly bring us to the “promised land”
  - d. we agree that following Jesus is a matter of life and death
    1. although we do not kill those who do not obey Jesus, we do recognize that *failing* to follow Christ will lead to spiritual death – those who refuse Christ *will be killed by him*
    2. **i.e.** we agree that our decision to trust in Christ is a matter of life and death
  - e. we commission him to be strong and courageous *on our behalf*
    1. **note:** seems “odd” to say that we “commission” Jesus to be strong, but note the *parallel*
    2. as the Israelites commissioned Joshua to stand in the face of hostility and *lead them forward*
      - a. they would meet many enemies along the way, but he would have to lead them *into the face* of those enemies and help them to conquer those enemies *under the power of God*
    2. **so the elect commission Jesus to lead them as they face the enemies of their faith**
      - a. **IOW:** we, too, commission Jesus to guide us forward through this life of constant temptation to both sin and apostasy – to use *his strength* to hold us fast *faithful to the end*
      - b. Jesus is our constant *intercessor (Hebrews 7:25)* – he “*lives to make intercession*” for “*those who draw near to God*” such that he is “*able to save [them] to the uttermost*”