



A Course

In

**GENERAL
BIBLE**

PART TWO

Prepared by the
Committee on Religious Education
of the
American Bible College

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Pineland, Florida 33945

INTRODUCTION

The history of Israel from the death of Moses to the coronation of David is mostly a sordid story. The years under Joshua were a time of thrilling conquest motivated by a holy purpose, but when the great leader died Israel slipped into a morass of sin that almost destroyed her. "Every man did that which was right in his own sight," and God's Chosen People almost lost their national identity! They did lose their spiritual uniqueness when they allowed the purity of their worship to become tainted with the heathen practices of their new neighbors; the worship of Jehovah was almost unrecognizable . . . and on the brink of extinction for a long, long time.

In general, the period is marked by the Israelites' willfulness and disobedience of Jehovah. The people would go their own, thoughtless way until their sins brought disaster upon them. Then, like children they would flee, to Jehovah who, they hoped, would protect. He did . . . always!

God had a purpose for Israel, and He would not abandon it, come what would, He punished His people often and severely but He never stopped loving them. Even as He chastised them He urged them on to the destiny He had set for them.

CHAPTER ONE

JOSHUA

Scripture Reading: Joshua 1-24

1. A leader is Trained. The word Joshua means, "Jehovah is salvation." According to the Bible record this great general, executive and servant of God was born the son of Nun and of the tribe of Ephriam. It seems clear from the Scriptural narrative that he was born a slave in Goshen in the land of Egypt. Perhaps this was not a very encouraging beginning for an outstanding leader, but we must remember that environment does not always determine destiny. George Washington Carver rose above his environment. Abraham Lincoln was born in a log cabin in the Kentucky wilderness, but he went on to occupy the White House. Our Savior grew up in Nazareth, a city proverbial for its wickedness, yet He lived without sin.

It is an irrefutable fact that some of the greatest leaders of all time grew up amid what the world today calls poverty. While we do not wish hardships upon anyone, we must admit that there is something about adversity's discipline which produces leaders. Love the underprivileged and respect them for you may be looking at a future leader for the Lord.

It is apparent that Joshua grew up in a godly home, a place where parents were honored and God was worshipped. The commands of authority were obeyed with cheerful obedience.

2. A leader is Developed. Early in his work as the deliverer of Israel, Moses was attracted by this strong young man, who was now perhaps about forty years of age. Joshua soon became known as Moses' minister (Joshua 1:1). He became a close associate, or what we might call the prime minister of Moses. We first see him in action against the Amalekites in Rephidim, and he accompanied Moses into the Mount of God, (Ex. 17:8-16; 24:13). No doubt, this close association with Moses helped to prepare Joshua to later become the former's successor and the leader of Israel. Many a younger man has been blessed by the association of one older in years and experience.

One of the memorable episodes in Joshua's life occurred on the borders of the Promised Land. Moses chose twelve men, one from each tribe, to spy out the land. Joshua was among their number. They searched the land forty days and returned with an enthusiastic report. They said it was a wealthy land, beautiful, productive, and luxurious. To prove it they produced exhibit number one, a cluster of grapes so large that they had to carry it on a pole between two men. But alas, though it was such a goodly land the inhabitants were giants and so well armed that Israel couldn't take it. That is what ten out of the twelve spies said. The other two, Caleb and Joshua had a different view. While it was true that there were well-armed giants and fortified cities in Canaan, Caleb and Joshua believed that nothing was too hard for the Lord. They believed God could give them the land. They said, "We are well able to take it," and they urged immediate action. However, the multitude listened to the ten doubters and doomed themselves to destruction in the wilderness.

There are still more doubters than believers. For every Caleb and Joshua who say, "It can be done", there are ten others, perhaps ten thousand others who say, "It can't be done." They told Fulton his steamboat wouldn't go, but it did. They told Morse they had rather invest money to build a railroad to the moon than invest in his telegraph, but it worked. They laughed at Westinghouse for thinking a train could be stopped with wind, but the air brake worked. They told Columbus that he was crazy for thinking that he could reach the East by sailing West, but he cried, "Sail on," and he discovered a whole New World. There was only one reason why Israel couldn't take the land of Canaan; they thought they couldn't. There is only one reason why some people today do not accomplish great things in life; they think they can't, so they don't try. This is why many do not accomplish great things for God and their fellow men.

3. Ordained to Lead. When the Lord informed Moses that he could not enter the land of promise, and that he must ascend Mount Nebo

to die, his last request was for Israel. Moses prayed that the Lord would elect a man to lead His people. The Lord heard and answered his prayer. "Take thee Joshua, the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay thine hand upon him; and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation; and give him a charge in their sight." Moses carefully followed the Lord's instruction. Joshua was selected and in a most solemn ceremony set apart as the new leader of Israel.

4. Commissioned for Leadership. Moses was one of the greatest men of all time. We often call him the lawgiver; however, the Scriptures call him "the servant of the Lord." Although he was born a slave, he became a prince. Born in bondage, he set a whole nation free. To deliver at least a million slaves from the strongest military power on earth took courage, patience, wisdom and organization. Moses had all these qualities and more. When the time of his departure came, Moses was one hundred and twenty years old. But in spite of his years, his eyes were not dim, nor his natural powers abated.

Moses would be a hard man to follow, but God would empower Joshua and make him a good successor. He declared, "As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee." This promise meant much, for the Lord had been with Moses all the way from the ark in the bulrushes to Mount Nebo. Today He says, "Fear not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." (Isaiah 41:10). He declares, "I am with you alway." (Matthew 28:20). When the great missionary, David Livingstone, returned to his native land after spending sixteen years in the dark continent of Africa he was given many honors.

The story of his explorations, trials, and triumphs for the Lord Jesus Christ stirred the hearts of thousands. Numerous honors were heaped upon him. When the University of Glasgow conferred on him the Doctor of Laws degree, he told that assembly of teachers and students the secret of his indomitable courage and perseverance. He said, "Shall I tell you what supported me through all these years of exile among a people whose language I could not understand and whose attitude toward me was always uncertain and often hostile?" He declared, "it was the word of Jesus, 'Lo, I am with you

alway, even unto the end of the world'".

The Lord's command to Joshua was short and to the point. His commands are usually this way. Jehovah's command was to start moving, cross Jordan and take possession of Canaan. The land had been promised to Israel, but they must do something in order to obtain it -- they must march. The Lord had given Joshua a command, and He would enable His servant to perform it. The Lord admonished Israel's new leader to be strong and of good courage, and to follow the example of Moses, and he was assured that the Lord would never fail him. He was not to allow the book of the law to depart out of his mouth, but to meditate upon it day and night. This was the road to success and happiness, the road to victory.

5. A Leader in Action. Joshua's first task as Israel's new commander was to take them across the Jordan. It was the time of year when the river was at flood tide and there were no bridges or boats. What a mighty miracle God performed! Instructions were given that when the priests who bore the ark should wade into the edge of the water, God would part it and they could all walk across on dry land. And so it happened. Lest the people should never forget this miracle, Joshua instructed twelve men to take stones from the riverbed and erect a monument for posterity in Gilgal. One of the big dangers of the Christian is forgetfulness, "Forget not all His benefits," is the admonition of the Psalmist. While the nation was encamped by Jericho, a stranger came to visit Joshua. Who was he? He was "the Captain of the Lord's host," and He told Joshua to take off his shoes, for he was standing on holy ground. The same One who had appeared to Moses at the burning bush, had now appeared to Joshua. "As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee."

6. A Leader in Battle. God's thoughts are not man's thoughts. It did not seem logical that the walls of a city could be torn down just by marching around it, blowing trumpets, and shouting; but it worked. Jericho fell. God's plan always works, if we follow it. The problem is that too many times we don't follow it. It didn't seem logical to Naaman that his leprosy could be healed by dipping seven times in the river Jordan, but it worked. Logical or not, Joshua followed the instructions of the Lord, and obedience brought victory. It still does. "Trust and obey for there's no other way". Ai was a

small city, but it brought a big defeat to the Israelites. The reason: disobedience. All the spoils of war except the gold and silver and vessels of iron and brass were to be destroyed. These items were to be reserved as an offering to the Lord. However, Achan disobeyed and took the forbidden articles. As a result the nation suffered defeat. The Lord told Joshua there was sin in the camp and it must be removed before there could be victory. Joshua acted quickly to remove the accursed thing. Can not sin bring defeat to churches and individuals today the same as it did in Israel's time? When the sin was removed from the camp, the army went up and quickly overcame Ai. Will not the removal of sin today bring great victories to churches and individuals?

7. A Leader and a Lesson. When the Gibeonites heard what had happened to Jericho and Ai, they feared for their lives. In order to escape destruction they devised a little scheme. We notice in connection with this episode that Joshua was very human. When the deceptive Gibeonites came to request that they be allowed to enter into a league with Israel, Joshua readily entered into the alliance. He forgot to ask counsel of the Lord. But once he had promised to protect the people of Gibeon, he was told to keep his word. The army of Israel promptly marched over and defended their new ally.

The battle in defense of the Gibeonites against the five kings of Canaan is probably one of the best known in history, not because of the battle itself, but because it was here that Joshua prayed for the sun to stand still. What was really involved on this occasion? Scientists tell us that this earth turns, and that the various planets revolve around one another. Therefore, the Lord upset the cycle of this solar system to answer His servant's prayer, and make the day longer so Israel could complete the defeat of her enemies. Astronomers have been able to show how this event fits into the account of past time. Does God answer prayer? He did for Joshua. He did for Daniel and for Elijah. What faith Joshua must have had to make such a request of God!

8. Final Conquests. The conquests of Joshua were many. In the struggle for Canaan their battles led them "In the mountains, and in the valleys, and in the plains, and in the springs, and in the wilderness and in the south country." Josh. 12:8. Thirty-one kings were subdued, Joshua 12:9-24. There were reasons for the victories God gave them.

One reason is found in the first chapter of Numbers. Read it and count the times it speaks of those who are able to go forth to war. Now notice Joshua 11:18. There we are told that Joshua made war a long time with all those kings. When the time of battle came all the able bodied soldiers were all there, I Kings 20:27. In our spiritual battles, revival campaigns, church growth, etc., there are many conditions determining victory or defeat.

When Joshua was old and well stricken in years the Lord told him to divide the land by portion to the tribes, as He had formerly commanded him, Joshua 13 :1-6. Not all the enemies had been subdued. There must necessarily be personal faith in God. Until this time everyone depended on God for deliverance through the faith and perseverance of their leaders. But when given their own possessions, each tribe had to trust God and seek Him for personal help. Now is a good time to re-read the 49th chapter of Genesis noting carefully each prophecy made by Jacob concerning his sons. Jacob was a great prophet.

9. The Tabernacle at Shiloh. The children of Israel did not wait until all were settled in their allotted portions before setting up the Tabernacle. "The whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled together at Shiloh and set up the Tabernacle of the congregation there," Joshua 18:1. It remained the central place of worship until just before God allowed the building of the Temple. It was referred to as the "House of the Lord in Shiloh" during the days of the Judges, I Samuel 1:24.

The people came to it there in Shiloh with their offerings just as they had in the wilderness, I Samuel 1:3. Finally, when the people of God forsook Him, He forsook Shiloh and destroyed it, read Psa. 78:58-61; Jeremiah 7:12; I Samuel 21:1-6; I Chronicles 16:39; 21:29.

10. The Cities of Refuge. Provision was made for the protection of all those who unwittingly committed murder, Joshua 20:1-9. There were six such cities at different parts of the country, three east and three west of the Jordan River.

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| 1. Kadesh | 4. Bezer |
| 2. Shechem | 5. Ramoth |
| 3. Kirjath-arba | 6. Galan |

These were the cities appointed for all the

children of Israel, and for the stranger (foreigner) that lived among them – Josh. 20:9. They stood in a figure, for the first six "Churches of Revelation", and represented safety to those who would flee to and remain in them.

The accused had to remain in the city until he could present his case to the congregation and until the death of the high priest, Joshua 20:6. What a lovely symbol of our high priest who liveth forever and all who have fled to Him for protection have laid hold on eternal life.

11. The Portion of the Levites. After the land was divided, the heads of the fathers of the Levites requested that Eleazer the priest present their claim for cities to dwell in. They were given no division of the land, but forty-eight cities and their suburbs were the "portion". They served at Shiloh and later at Jerusalem by course. It was God's plan that the Levites, His ministers to the people, live holy, separate lives. God gave them the tithe of their brethren for their sustenance, Lev. 27:30; Num. 18:26; Heb. 7:5.

Tithing is recognition that the Creator, Jehovah-Elohim owns all of the earth. Tithing was not instituted under the law. Its first mention in Genesis 14:20 is in connection with Abraham. Next we see Jacob, spontaneously, out of an awed and humble heart entering the covenant of tithing with the Lord. God used that system during the dispensation of the law, Deut. 14 :22; Nehemiah 10:37. But it came on through the law and was recommended by our Lord, Matthew 23 :23. If anyone doubts the divine origin of this plan, let him take up God's own challenge, Malachi 4:8-10.

12. The Altar "Ed". (Josh. 22:34) Two and one-half tribes chose to stay on the East side of the Jordan River, Josh. 1:14. They passed over Jordan with their brethren and helped them subdue the land, Joshua 1:15. Then Joshua commanded them to return home, cautioning them to remain faithful to Jehovah.

However, they did a very unwise act when they returned home, i.e., THEY BUILT THEMSELVES AN ALTAR. The tribes west of the Jordan River immediately saw the danger in such an act and sent Phinehas and ten princes to confer with them. They reminded them of past judgments of God for idolatry, Joshua 22 :17, and even personal sin, Joshua 22 :30. They reminded them that they needed no altar besides

the altar of the Lord at Shiloh, Joshua 20:19.

The men of tribes of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh explained that they had no intention to ever offer sacrifice on the altar, but built it only as a witness that "the Lord is God." Joshua 22:34. Their explanation was accepted. The lesson here is evident. From the time of the building of the tabernacle God has had one place for His altar. First it was the Tabernacle; next it was in the temple; now it is in His Church.

13. Loyalty to God's Word. "Loyalty [faithfulness] to God's word" writes Dr. Crannell means the possession of God's word, in hand and head and heart. 'This book of the law' which Moses had written and placed by the side of the ark 'shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate thereon day and night;' outward expression reveals inward possession. Loyalty means not simply theoretical study, appreciation, nor just academic acceptance, but thoughtful practical execution. God's Word to Joshua and to us is meant for daily life and its needs. It is a most wonderful book philosophically, theologically and as literature; unsurpassed in all ways; worthy of our greatest admiration; as we see, the more we study it; but the Bible is supremely a book of directions.

"Real loyalty is universal, comprehensive, complete; it does not permit obedience to 'this' and disobedience to 'that'; the soldier does not choose which order to obey: God says 'do according to all the law which Moses commanded.' Moses' Lord, and our Lord, has in the Great Commission substituted for Moses' law his own law: 'Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you.' Loyalty is also exact and precise: 'turn not from it to the right nor left.' If a surgeon turns from the straight line he ought to cut, sometimes, even by a hairsbreadth, it means death. If a soldier deviates from his orders, fails to come up at a certain place at a certain hour, to meet and work with other troops also under precise orders, the battle is lost.

"Loyalty thus constant, precise, unvarying, is the condition of victory: 'thou shalt have good success.' Success comes because loyalty wins God's favor. What father, leader, superior officer, employer is not pleased with it, and inclined to favor and further it? It means too that one is supplementing one's own knowledge, wisdom, power to plan and direct, with God's: 'thou shalt deal wisely'. Whoever will take the word of God

on great moral questions, follow the suggestions, heed the warnings, will not only be saved from a thousand pitfalls waylaying the unwary foot, but will be constructing his life on the real principles that spell success, that underlie prosperity as truly as the principles of chemistry underlie success in chemical work: 'thou shalt make thy way prosperous.'

"Most of all, because such loyal obedience puts us in line with God's forces, puts us where He can help, where He will help where He does help. When one goes where God directs, 'Jehovah thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest'; that is better than 'hitching our wagon to a star'. Loyalty so complete, undeviating, is not easy. There are opponents right and left; people who stubbornly resist obedience. Whoever 'observes to do all' God's will in face of vested evil interests of bad practices entrenched in politics and society, as these heathen nations were entrenched in Canaan, must needs be 'strong and very courageous.' There are enemies inside the camp, weak-kneed fellow soldiers who falter at strict obedience, obstinate ones who hinder obedience, disloyal ones who betray us to the enemy, or sap our strength by their inconsistency.

"Even a soldier like Joshua met situations which, if he did not have his faith in God to stiffen his native resolution, would blanch his cheek and make his heart melt; all the more, the better soldier he is, and the more fully he grasps the situation. Hence God says to this warrior, whom some of us would never suspect of needing it; 'Be not afraid, neither dismayed'; and three times he says 'Be strong, and of good courage.'"

14. A Leader's Farewell. Joshua served the Lord and Israel for many years. The nation was at last settled in Canaan and he was now old. Knowing that his time was short, he called the nation together and delivered to them his final admonition. He urged them to love the Lord, and to stay separate from the nations round about, to not mingle with the heathen. He reminded them that disobedience would bring a curse upon them; obedience would bring a blessing. The choice was theirs!

The Christian soul is enriched by reading and rereading these last words and council. He reiterates the blessings of God and admonished

the people to be courageous and true to God. Joshua hoped to pass his loyalty on knowing that it is loyalty in a nation's heart that counts, not one on its statute books. The Scripture says, "Israel served Jehovah all the days of Joshua, and the days of the elders that outlived Joshua."

Joshua erected a stone as a memorial that the Children of Israel covenanted to serve the Lord. "Behold, this stone shall be a witness unto us; for it hath heard all the words of the Lord which he spake unto us; it shall be therefore a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God. So Joshua let the people depart, every man unto his inheritance." Joshua 24:27-28

"Choose ye this day - - whom ye will serve . . . "As for me and my house" said Joshua, "we will serve the Lord." We need homes like this today. Our country needs them. Let ours be such.

END OF SAMPLE