

Monday Week 19 **Joshua Leads the People**

Q 73 After Moses died, who led the Children of Israel?

A. Joshua led the people after Moses died.

Bible Reading: Joshua 1:1-6

A preacher named Adrian Rogers told the story of a man who was bragging that he had cut the tail off of a man eating lion with his pocket knife. Someone asked him why he didn't cut off its head. "Because someone else had already cut off its head," he answered. That man wanted people to think he was brave, when he really wasn't.

When Moses died, God chose Joshua to lead Israel. Joshua wasn't a man who bragged about what he did or what he would do. It seems that Joshua may have been somewhat fearful about being chosen to lead the people. God told him to "be of good courage." It is important for us to trust God when we are asked to do something new. If we trust in our own strength, we are sure to fail. Joshua trusted God. God made him a good leader.

Thinking Deeper

When God chose Joshua to lead Israel, he gave him a great promise: "as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee." Then God told him to "be strong and of a good courage." Again He told Joshua, "only be thou strong and very courageous." And just to make sure he didn't miss the point, God repeated, "Be strong and of a good courage." So Joshua turned to the people and began to instruct them. They responded by accepting his leadership, and then added a word of encouragement. "Only be strong and of a good courage."

What makes a good leader? If Joshua's installation is a clue, then good leadership requires strength and courage. The strength is derived from the word of God. "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success" (Joshua 1:8). God wanted Joshua to be strong in the Word. A good leader will have the Bible as his guide and the controlling force in his life. He will derive his strength from the Word of God. A wrong leader will ignore the Bible and promote his own thinking and agenda.

A good leader will also be courageous. It takes courage to consistently apply the truth of the Bible to the circumstance of life. It takes courage to lead a family in godliness when the world is filled with evil. It takes courage for a church leader to hold to the Bible when others are ignoring parts of it that are not currently popular. Joshua's success as a leader was based on his fidelity to the word of God.

Tuesday Week 19 **Joshua Leads the People**

Q 74 Why did Joshua send two spies to Jericho

A. Joshua sent spies to view the land.

Bible Reading: Joshua 2:1-7

Spies have been around for a long time. You may have heard of Nathan Hale, a spy who worked for the Patriots during the American Revolution. He was caught by the British. Before he was hung, he is quoted as saying, "I regret that I have but one life to give for my country." Some spies were women. One was a singer who wrote information on the back of her music. She used invisible ink. Some spies smuggled documents by hiding them in their shoes, or hiding tiny film inside of coins that they had cut into two sides, hollowed out, and then glued them back together.

Joshua sent two spies to see what Jericho was like. They were to find information that would be helpful when the Israelite Army invaded the land around Jericho. Like all spies, they would be in danger if they got caught. God helped the spies through a woman named Rahab. God cares about His people. If we trust Him, He will help us.

Thinking Deeper

Some people think that Joshua sent only two spies because of what happened forty years earlier. That's when twelve spies were sent to look at the Promised Land. Ten out of twelve brought back an evil report. Joshua and Caleb brought a good report. The people were persuaded by an evil report, and forty years were spent in the wilderness while that generation of unbelievers died off.

Joshua did things differently. It is likely that he picked two spies he could trust, rather than picking spies from each tribe. He wanted an accurate report. But he also wanted people who would see things through eyes of faith. Another difference is that these spies were sent secretly. They didn't come back and give a report to all of the people. They were sent out by Joshua to be his eyes and ears. When they returned, they reported directly to him. "And they said unto Joshua, Truly the LORD hath delivered into our hands all the land; for even all the inhabitants of the country do faint because of us" (Joshua 2:24)

It is not necessarily wrong to find things out about the enemy. It would have been helpful in the Scopes Monkey Trials, for example, had William Jennings Bryan found out about the character of pro-Darwinist lawyer Clarence Darrow. Darrow's personal character was very suspect, and had that been known, certain aspects of the trial could have been changed. It may have been helpful, in another example, had Christians known that anthropologist Margaret Mead was having an affair while she was doing research in the South Pacific. Her research was showing that young people in "pristine" tribes had no inhibitions sexually. Why should it come as a surprise, over fifty years later, to learn that her conclusions were flat out wrong? A little spying by the good guys might have helped.

Wednesday Week 19 **Joshua Leads the People**

Q 75 What did Rahab do with the scarlet cord?

A. Rahab used the scarlet cord to help the spies escape and as a sign for her safety.

Bible Reading: Joshua 2:8-18

In 1949, a cruise ship named the S S Noronic was docked in Lake Ontario. Late one night it caught on fire. Many people were trapped on the top deck of the ship. They tried to escape, but the stairways were too dangerous to use. They found ropes which they threw over the side of the ship. One rope broke because too many people tried to climb down at one time. They fell into the water and were rescued. Other ropes held as person after person climbed down to safety. Some people perished in the fire, but many were saved because they escaped by a rope.

When the two spies Joshua had sent were being chased, they found a place to hide at Rahab's house. She decided that she would help them because she believed that Israel's God was the true God. She helped them get out of the city by putting a scarlet rope out her window and letting them climb down. The spies told her to put the scarlet rope in her window. It would be a sign that the house was to be protected when the Israelite soldiers came. Her faith saved her whole household.

Thinking Deeper

Rahab's decision to help God's people was based on her faith that the God of Israel was the true God. As she faced the police who had come to search for the spies, she was making a decision. If she helped the police, she risked the destruction sure to come to Jericho. If she helped the spies and was found out, she could be in trouble with Jericho's forces. She had heard about the God of Israel and His power. She decided to help the spies. In haste, she hid them on her roof, covering them with stalks of flax. In haste, she hid her actions, covering them by words that denied she knew where they were. We could condemn her for lying, or commend her for helping God's people. The inspired writer of Hebrews, in the great chapter on heroes of faith, commended her for her act. "By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace" (Heb. 11:31).

It is helpful to see what kind of faith Rahab possessed. It was more than an awareness that Israel's God was powerful, because the other Jericho inhabitants believed that, and their hearts melted. It was that she believed with the kind of faith that threw in her lot with God's people. Rahab chose to identify with the people of God and therefore "perished not with them that believed not."

Thursday Week 19 **Joshua Leads the People**

Q 76 How did the people cross the Jordan River?

A. The people crossed on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan River.

Bible Reading: Joshua 3:10-17

Davy was four years old and on his first fishing trip. His mother had brought him to the creek. He tried fishing, but nothing bit. So he put down his rod and looked for something else to do. A tree leaned far out over the water. Davy thought he might try to climb out a ways. It wasn't hard climbing because the tree was leaning so much. Suddenly he lost his grip. Splash! He fell into the water. His mother had to pull him out. Since they were wet, they had to go home. The fishing trip was over.

Normally, if you are in a creek or a river you will get wet. But the Children of Israel went through the Jordan River and stayed dry. God stopped the water and they walked on dry land. As long as the priests stood in the river bed, it stayed dry. Only after all the people crossed over and the priests followed did the water return. God made a way for them to cross the Jordan River.

Thinking Deeper

There is a humorous story that made its rounds about the Israelites crossing the Red Sea. A skeptic explained that what they crossed was really the "Reed Sea," and the wind dried up only about four inches of water, enabling the crossing on relatively dry ground. After this explanation, a man jumped to his feet and exclaimed, "This is even a greater miracle than I thought. God drowned the whole Egyptian Army in four inches of water!"

Trying to explain some of these Biblical accounts by employing unusual natural phenomena encounters a major problem when it comes to explaining the crossing of the Jordan River. The Bible states that the water was piled up in a heap upstream, and dried up downstream. There is no mention of wind. The only explanation is some kind of invisible barrier placed exactly where it was needed so that the Israelites could cross. The hand of God comes to mind. God directly intervened, or the whole account is non-real mythology.

Deists claim that God is not involved in the affairs of men or nature. He made it all and then walked away. Modern "scientism" proponents take the same view of issues of nature. They don't object at all if we believe in a God that has nothing to do with nature or science. But if we propose that God is involved, they become agitated, to put it mildly. So the Jordan Crossing becomes an interesting issue. If the Biblical account is accurate, then Deism is exposed as false.

Friday Week 19 **Joshua Leads the People**

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Q 76 How did the people cross the Jordan River?

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After the Revolutionary war, George Washington was asked to become the first President of the United States. He seemed rather reluctant to take on this great position. After he agreed, his hesitancy was still rather obvious to his friends. In a letter to Henry Knox, dated in April of 1789, he wrote, "My movements to the chair of Government will be accompanied by feelings not unlike those of a culprit who is going to the place of his execution." Yet Washington took over the leadership of the new nation, and has been considered to have been one of our greatest presidents.

Joshua led the people when God gave him the job. He may have been hesitant to be the leader, but he did what God asked him to do. God told Joshua that He would be with Him. Joshua became a great leader in Israel.

If God puts you in a place where you are a leader, He will help you do a good job. Great leaders are those who are willing to do what God asks them to do. If you do small things God asks you to do now, there will come a time when you can do great things for God. God is no respecter of persons. The word to Joshua is to encourage all of us: "I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee" (Joshua 1:5b).

Thinking Deeper

Joshua was installed as leader by God. When his leadership became known, it was confirmed by the people. Yet he was untested. His test came soon, for Israel came to the Jordan River. After the miracle crossing, it was obvious to all the people that the Lord was truly with Joshua. "On that day the LORD magnified Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they feared him, as they feared Moses, all the days of his life" Joshua 4:14).

There is something about being in the place God chooses. There was only one Moses when he led the people. And there was only one Joshua when he was chosen. Moses was "the meekest man that ever lived" and Joshua seems to have learned well the lesson of meekness from Moses. By way of contrast, later in Israel's history the kings were ambitious and devious men who grasped for power. After David's reign, there were few men who understood the importance of waiting for God's timing and placement of leaders.

Patience, humility, and trust in God's leadership, coupled with strength and courage molded God's leaders. The application of this to our present day is that we are to lead where God places us, and not ever try to force our leadership on anyone. Ultimately, leadership is God's business.

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