

The Old Testament Prophets

Volume Two

By

Mark McGee

Joshua Leads Israel Into The Promised Land

I first want to establish that Joshua was an Old Testament prophet. We know that Moses was, but what about Joshua? Any evidence to support that claim?

> Then Joshua charged them at that time, saying, 'Cursed be the man before the Lord who rises up and builds this city Jericho; he shall lay its foundation with his firstborn, and with his youngest he shall set up its gates. Joshua 6:26
>
> And Ahab made a wooden image. Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him. In his days Hiel of Bethel built Jericho. He laid its foundation with Abiram his firstborn, and with his youngest son Segub he set up its gates, according to the word of the Lord, which He had spoken through Joshua the son of Nun. 1 Kings 16:33-34

Those are two examples of how Joshua prophesied a specific future event that came true exactly as he said it would. However, it's also important to remember that a prophet did more than accurately predict future events. They also spoke for the Lord as He spoke to them. We will see many examples of that in this part of our series about Old Testament Prophets.

God Calls Joshua to be a Prophet

After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, it came to pass that the Lord spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, saying: 'Moses My servant is dead. Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them—the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses.' Joshua 1:1-3

Notice that 'the Lord spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant.' That's a clue to Joshua's position as a prophet of God. Another huge clue is Deuteronomy 31 – the entire chapter. Here are a few examples pertaining to God's call on Joshua's life and ministry:

> "The Lord your God Himself crosses over before you; He will destroy these nations from before you, and you shall dispossess them. Joshua himself crosses over before you, just as the Lord has said." 31:3-4

“Then Moses called Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, “Be strong and of good courage, for you must go with this people to the land which the Lord has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall cause them to inherit it. And the Lord, He is the One who goes before you. He will be with you, He will not leave you nor forsake you; do not fear nor be dismayed.” 31:7-8

“Therefore Moses wrote this song the same day, and taught it to the children of Israel. Then He inaugurated Joshua the son of Nun, and said, “Be strong and of good courage; for you shall bring the children of Israel into the land of which I swore to them, and I will be with you.” 31:22-23

One more example from when Moses died:

> "Now Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him; so the children of Israel heeded him, and did as the Lord had commanded Moses."

This is evidence that God called Joshua to be a prophet to Israel. What we witness in this portion of God's Word is the Prophet Moses passing the 'prophetic mantle' to Joshua to carry on the plan of God for His people. As we follow Israel and Joshua from the wilderness into the Promised Land we will see Joshua acting as a prophet, though God viewed Moses in a unique way:

> "But since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, in all the signs and wonders which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt, before Pharaoh, before all his servants, and in all his land, and by all that mighty

> power and all the great terror which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel." Deuteronomy 34:10-12

God has an intimate relationship with Moses for four decades that led Moses to be so highly regarded by God and by the people of Israel. However, there is a greater Prophet than Moses who would arise in the future. That Prophet's name is Jesus. Here's what Moses prophesied:

> "And the Lord said to me: 'What they have spoken is good. I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. And it shall be that whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require it of him." Deuteronomy 18:17-19

The Jewish people did not forget God's promise, which is why they often referred to Jesus as 'the Prophet.' They saw something in the Lord Jesus that told them He was the Prophet Moses had prophesied centuries earlier:

> "Then those men, when they had seen the sign that Jesus did, said, "This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world." John 6:14

Why Is This Important?

The reason it's important to understand that God chose Joshua to succeed Moses is because of what a 'prophet' was in God's economy (management of His people).

> "Surely the Lord God does nothing, Unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets." Amos 3:7

God, in His Eternal Wisdom, chose to explain His Eternal Secrets to ‘prophets.’ The Hebrew word for ‘prophet’ is נָבִיא (nabiy’). It comes from the word נָבָא (naba’), ‘one who speaks by inspiration.’ God ‘speaks’ to them and through them to others. The true prophet of God knows that God has spoken to him and can say with confidence, “Thus says the Lord.’ This is what God said to Moses when He sent Him to speak to Pharaoh:

> “And the Lord said to Moses, “When you go back to Egypt, see that you do all those wonders before Pharaoh which I have put in your hand. But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go. Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the Lord: “Israel is My son, My firstborn. So I say to you, let My son go that he may serve Me. But if you refuse to let him go, indeed I will kill your son, your firstborn.” Exodus 4:21-23

What God Expected of Joshua

God wasted no time after Moses' death in giving His directions to Joshua:

> "After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, it came to pass that the Lord spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, saying: "Moses My servant is dead. Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them—the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the River Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your territory. No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you. Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. Only

> be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe 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. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."

Joshua had served Moses for decades (e.g. Exodus 17). When Moses went up to the mountain to meet with God, he took Joshua with him:

> "So Moses arose with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up to the mountain of God." Exodus 24:13

In Numbers 11:28 Joshua was called – 'Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, one of his choice men.' Joshua was one of only two men of the twelve who Moses sent out to spy the 'Promised Land' who believed Israel could defeat the Canaanites. Because of Joshua and Caleb's trust in God, they were the only two who were alive at the end of Israel's wandering the wilderness for 40 years:

> "But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh remained alive, of the men who went to spy out the land." Number 14:38

Joshua was a faithful man who could be trusted to follow every order from Moses and from God. That's one reason God ordained Joshua to take Moses' place after the prophet died.

> "Then He inaugurated Joshua the son of Nun, and said, "Be strong and of good courage; for you shall bring the children of Israel into the land of which I

> swore to them, and I will be with you." Deuteronomy 31:23

What God expected of Joshua was that he lead the children of Israel into the land that He promised Moses decades earlier:

> "And the Lord said: "I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows. So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites. Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel has come to Me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them." Exodus 3:7-9

What God Expected of Israel

God expected a great deal from Israel. It started when He called a pagan named Abram to leave his home and travel hundreds of miles to a place he had never been – the land of Canaan. Abram, who became Abraham, would be the man who God would use to carry on a promise He had made centuries earlier:

> “So the Lord God said to the serpent: “Because you have done this, You are cursed more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you shall go, And you shall eat dust All the days of your life. And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.”
> Genesis 3:14-15

As you look through the ancient genealogy of God's 'Seed,' you will see that Abraham was a vital part of God's eternal plan to bring the Savior into the world:

> "Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot Judah and his brothers." Matthew 1:1

Jacob was Abraham's grandson through his son Isaac. Jacob had twelve sons and one daughter. God changed Jacob's name to "Israel' (Genesis 32:28), so his sons became the 'twelve tribes of Israel.' Notice in Matthew's lineage (as well as Luke's, chapter three), Judah is mentioned as the one God chose from the twelve tribes to carry forth God's Seed.

Jacob's deathbed prophecy concerning Judah is insightful concerning the Seed who would one day die for our sins and rise to rule the world:

> “Judah, you are he whom your brothers shall praise; Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; Your father’s children shall bow down before you. Judah is a lion’s whelp; From the prey, my son, you have gone up. He bows down, he lies down as a lion; And as a lion, who shall rouse him? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor a lawgiver from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes;And to Him shall be the obedience of the people. Binding his donkey to the vine, And his donkey’s colt to the choice vine, He washed his garments in wine, And his clothes in the blood of grapes. His eyes are darker than wine, And his teeth whiter than milk.” Genesis 49:8-12

You can read Genesis chapters 37 – 50 for the full story of how Jacob (Israel) and his sons came to leave the land of Canaan for Egypt. That’s where they eventually became slaves of Pharaoh. It was there that Moses was born, raised in Pharaoh’s palace, only to run away to Midian to save his life. Then God called Moses to return from Midian to free His people from slavery in Egypt:

> "Now the Lord said to Moses in Midian, "Go, return to Egypt; for all the men who sought your life are dead." Then Moses took his wife and his sons and set them on a donkey, and he returned to the land of Egypt. And Moses took the rod of God in his hand." Exodus 4:19-20

Moses did lead the 'children of Israel' out of Egypt through a series of miracles. He led them through the wilderness north of Egypt for 40 years, then died. It was then that God make Joshua the new leader of the children of Israel. God explained His purpose for Israel:

> "Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, "Pass through the camp and command the people, saying, 'Prepare provisions for yourselves, for within three days you will cross over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land which the Lord your God is giving you to possess.' " Joshua 1:10-11

The ‘children of Israel’ were also called ‘armies:’

> “These are the same Aaron and Moses to whom the Lord said, “Bring out the children of Israel from the land of Egypt according to their armies.” Exodus 6:26
>
> “And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years—on that very same day—it came to pass that all the armies of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt.” Exodus 12:41
>
> “And it came to pass, on that very same day, that the Lord brought the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt according to their armies.” Exodus 12:51

The Armies of the Lord

It's important that we understand that God had always intended for Jacob's sons (twelve tribes of Israel) to become His armies that would destroy His enemies and conquer the land of Canaan for His glory – land He had promised to Abraham centuries before. This was part of God's royal 'decree' that was part of an 'eternal' plan .. not something God came up within time and space. It was always His plan.

Joshua and the tribes of Israel had learned many things about warfare during their time of wandering. Joshua was not a novice when it came to leading armies into battle. One example is Exodus 17:8-13:

“Now Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim. And Moses said to Joshua, “Choose us some men and go out, fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand.” So Joshua did as Moses said to him, and fought with Amalek. And Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. And so it was, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses’ hands became heavy; so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it. And Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.”

You can also look at Israel's defeat of other enemies in Numbers 21. That happened before Moses died, but Joshua would have played a major role in those victories even though his name is not mentioned. Even though the Israelites became discouraged and sinned against God at one point, the Lord forgave them as they looked upon the 'fiery serpent.' From there, Israel went on to multiple victories over their enemies. God was preparing Israel to fight.

Borders and Boundaries

When God created the ‘heavens and the earth,’ He made borders and boundaries for them. Here are a few examples:

> “Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day.” Genesis 1:3-5
>
> “Then God said, “Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.” Thus God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament; and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. So the evening and the morning were the second day.” Genesis 1:6-8

> “Then God said, “Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear”; and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering together of the waters He called Seas. And God saw that it was good.” Genesis 1:9-10

After the Great Flood, God established agricultural and seasonal boundaries:

> “While the earth remains, Seedtime and harvest, Cold and heat, Winter and summer, And day and night Shall not cease.” Genesis 8:22

When God called Abram from the ‘Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan’ (Genesis 11:31), the Lord promised Abram (Abraham) an area of land in the Middle East that would belong to God’s people:

> "To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates—the Kenites, the Kenezzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites." Genesis 15:18-20

Moses reminded the children of Israel about the 'boundaries' that God had promised them as an 'inheritance:'

> "Remember the days of old, Consider the years of many generations. Ask your father, and he will show you; Your elders, and they will tell you: When the Most High divided their inheritance to the nations, When He separated the sons of Adam, He set the boundaries of the peoples According to the number of the children of Israel. For the Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the place of His inheritance." Deuteronomy 32:7-9

God laid out the borders and boundaries for each of the ‘tribes of Israel:’

> “Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, “Command the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘When you come into the land of Canaan, this is the land that shall fall to you as an inheritance—the land of Canaan to its boundaries.” Number 34:1-2

As you read through Numbers 34 you will find Israel’s northern, southern, eastern, and western borders. The next thing God was to assign Joshua and Eleazar the priest oversee the division of the land to each of the tribes. Those would be the ‘tribal boundaries.’ God also commanded that Israel establish cities for the Levites and ‘cities of refuge’ (Numbers 35).

Joshua's Challenge

After the death of Moses, God gave Joshua the command to cross the Jordan River and give the children of Israel 'the land which I am giving to them' (Joshua 1:2). It was a unique and difficult challenge to Joshua and the 'armies of Israel' because other nations already lived in the land God had promised to them. Would the other nations just get up and move out of the way to allow the tribes of Israel to move in? No. God's command meant that Joshua and the tribes of Israel would have to 'conquer' the other nations – and that's what they did.

But how would they accomplish God's command? How would a group of nomadic tribes defeat powerful nations living behind fortified walls in fortified cities with their own well-equipped armies? Humanly speaking, it didn't seem possible. So, how did Israel do it? Here's a clue:

> “And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, a Man stood opposite him with His sword drawn in His hand. And Joshua went to Him and said to Him, “Are You for us or for our adversaries?” So He said, “No, but as Commander of the army of the Lord I have now come.” And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped, and said to Him, “What does my Lord say to His servant?” Then the Commander of the Lord’s army said to Joshua, “Take your sandal off your foot, for the place where you stand is holy.” And Joshua did so.” Joshua 5:13-15

Joshua and the nomadic tribes of Israel would not the many battle in their own power. God would fight with and for them. Who has the Commander of the Lord’s army? Why would Joshua ‘worship’ the Commander? Why would he call the Commander ‘Lord?’ Why did the Commander tell Joshua to take his sandals off, ‘for the place there you stand is holy?’ Remind you of anything else we’ve read in this series before?

> "Then He said, "Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground." Moreover He said, "I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God." Exodus 3:5-6

The Commander of the Lord was the Lord Himself – most likely what theologians call a 'theophany' – a temporary appearance of the Son of God (what some theologians call a 'Christophany') This supernatural event was different than the 'Incarnation' when the the Son of God 'became flesh' (John 1:14). Examples of 'theophanies' include Genesis 3:8; Genesis 18:1-15; and Genesis 32:24-30.

The Challenge of Jericho

The fortified city of Jericho would be Joshua's first challenge and the first example of God would intervene supernaturally on behalf of the tribes of Israel:

> "Now Jericho was securely shut up because of the children of Israel; none went out, and none came in. And the Lord said to Joshua: "See! I have given Jericho into your hand, its king, and the mighty men of valor. You shall march around the city, all you men of war; you shall go all around the city once. This you shall do six days. And seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark. But the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets. It shall come to pass, when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when you hear the sound of the trumpet, that all the people shall shout with a great shout; then the wall of the city will fall down flat. And

> the people shall go up every man straight before him." Joshua 6:1-5

Read the rest of Joshua chapter six and you'll see that what God told Joshua and Israel did worked:

> "So the people shouted when the priests blew the trumpets. And it happened when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat. Then the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city. And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, ox and sheep and donkey, with the edge of the sword." Joshua 6:20-21

Jericho was just the beginning:

> "So the Lord was with Joshua, and his fame spread throughout all the country." Joshua 6:27

Joshua's Conquests

The fame of Joshua and the armies of Israel did 'become 'spread throughout all the country.' You can read the details in Joshua chapters six through eleven. Here's how chapter eleven ends:

> "So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the Lord had said to Moses; and Joshua gave it as an inheritance to Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. Then the land rested from war." Joshua 11:23

There is much more to the story and I hope you'll read all of the Book of Joshua. He was one of Israel's greatest prophets and military leaders. His final words to the tribes are worthy reading again and again:

“Now therefore, fear the Lord, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the Lord! And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord … Then Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God. And he took a large stone, and set it up there under the oak that was by the sanctuary of the Lord. And Joshua said to all the people, “Behold, this stone shall be a witness to us, for it has heard all the words of the Lord which He spoke to us. It shall therefore be a witness to you, lest you deny your God.” So Joshua let the people depart, each to his own inheritance.” Joshua 24:14-15, 26-28

Joshua had a powerful influence on the nation of Israel and will long be remembered for his service to God, Moses, and God's chosen people:

> "Now it came to pass after these things that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being one hundred and ten years old. And they buried him within the border of his inheritance at Timnath Serah, which is in the mountains of Ephraim, on the north side of Mount Gaash. Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had. known all the works of the Lord which He had done for Israel." Joshua 24:29-31

Next eBook

Which prophet arose after Joshua? We'll see in the next part of my series – The Old Testament Prophets.

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