

The LORD's first recorded word to Joshua as leader of Israel after Moses' death was to assure him that He would be with Joshua just as He was with Moses. The LORD reminds Joshua of his responsibility to Israel and encourages him to be "strong and courageous" in his leadership of Israel, remaining obedient to the law of God and faithful in the responsibility of leading Israel into the promised land.

The Book of Joshua tracks Israel's history under Joshua's leadership and covers the last 20 years or so of his life. It begins shortly after Moses' death and ends with Joshua's death at the age of 110. Joshua's two main accomplishments were the conquest of Canaan and handing out the land allotments to the tribes of Israel after the land had been conquered.

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2 Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, *even* to the children of Israel.

**"Moses my servant is dead"** – Verses 2-9 is what the LORD spoke to Joshua after the death of Moses (v. 1). He reminds Joshua that Moses is dead, and therefore it is time for the people to move on. Moses was a great leader but he is dead and they must finish what he started and accomplish the purpose that God has for Israel in the land of Canaan.

**"now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people"** – The LORD's purposes are larger than any man and it's time to take the next step in the journey that the LORD has for the children of Israel. The LORD commands Joshua to prepare to take the people across the Jordan River into the land of Canaan.

**"unto the land which I do give to them, *even* to the children of Israel"** – The LORD had promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that the land of Canaan would belong to them and their descendants. Now, under Joshua's leadership, the children of Israel would begin to take possession of that which the LORD had promised them.

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3 Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses. 4 From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast.

**"Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses"** – This is what God promised through Moses in **Deut. 11:24**: *"Every place whereon the soles of your feet shall tread shall be yours: from the wilderness and Lebanon, from the river, the river Euphrates, even unto the uttermost sea shall your coast be."*

**"From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates"** – This specifies the northern and eastern borders of the land given to Israel. The mountains of Lebanon are some 50 miles north of the Sea of Galilee, while the Euphrates River is far northeast east of the Sea of Galilee. Israel's territory did not extend to the Euphrates until the reign of Solomon.

**"all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast [border]"** – This specifies the southern and western borders. The territory of the Hittites was in southern Canaan and "the great sea toward the going down of the sun" refers to the Mediterranean Sea to the west.

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5 There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.

**"There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life"** – This was also God's promise through Moses: **Deut. 7:24** *"And he shall deliver their kings into thine hand, and thou shalt destroy their name from under heaven: there shall no man be able to stand before thee, until thou have destroyed them."* The LORD was promising total victory over the enemies in the land.

**"as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee"** – Joshua had seen the results of the LORD being with Moses and now the LORD was promising to do the same for him. The LORD assures Joshua that he can depend on the LORD to never fail or forsake him.

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6 Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I swore unto their fathers to give them.

The LORD urges Joshua to prepare himself to be strong and courageous for the formidable task ahead. Joshua's job will be to divide the land of Canaan among the tribes of Israel but the first task will be to conquer the land and drive out the current inhabitants. Israel was not an invader but the owner coming to take possession of the land that the LORD had promised to give to "their fathers" (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob).

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7 Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it *to* the right hand or *to* the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest.

**"Only be thou strong and very courageous"** – The LORD repeats the command to be strong and courageous, for even though the LORD had promised to give them the land, it would still require courage and strength to see its fulfillment. Often we will not see the fulfillment of God's promises to us until we trust Him and respond with strength and courage to obey what He has commanded.

**"that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee"** – While the LORD's promise of the land was unconditional, Israel's disobedience had already delayed its fulfillment by 40 years. The LORD warns Joshua that they will need to obey the law that had been given through Moses in order for them to receive the land.

**"turn not from it *to* the right hand or *to* the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest"** – The LORD will only prosper them in the conquest of Canaan if they obey the law of God and remain faithful to Him. Disobedience would cause the LORD to withdraw and cease helping them.

8 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.

**“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth”** – They were not to read it and then immediately forget what they read. Rather, they were to speak of it with others, recite from memory, and teach others about the content of the law.

**“but thou shalt meditate therein day and night”** – They were to study and meditate on the law in order to better understand it and make it a continual part of their life. Centuries later, Ezra the priest was zealous to do this: **Ezra 7:10** “*For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD [in order to understand it], and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.*”

**“that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein”** – The purpose of immersing themselves in the law of God was to make it part of their life so that their habit would be to obey it and seek to please God.

**“for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success”** – The promise to Israel was that the LORD would prosper them when they were obeying Him. Implied is the idea that they would not prosper and have success if they did not obey. Israel’s history bears this fact out: Israel prospered when they were faithful to the LORD in obedience and they did not prosper when they turned away into idolatry. Today, we cannot expect God to bless us if we are disobeying Him.

9 Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God *is* with thee whithersoever thou goest.

**“Have not I commanded thee?”** – The LORD emphasizes that all that He has just said is not a suggestion but a command.

**“Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed”** – The enemies in Canaan were formidable and it would be easy to become afraid and hesitate in obeying the LORD’s command for them to take the land. However, the LORD repeats His call for Joshua and Israel to trust Him and not be afraid.

**“for the LORD thy God *is* with thee whithersoever thou goest”** – The LORD promises that He will be with them to give victory in the conquest of Canaan. “Whithersoever thou goest” does not refer to where Israel chose to go but where the LORD guided them to go.

10 Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, 11 Pass through the host, and command the people, saying, Prepare you victuals; for within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land, which the LORD your God giveth you to possess it.

**“Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people”** – Joshua, having received his marching orders from the LORD, now turns to the officers of Israel and commands them to prepare to enter the land of Canaan.

**“saying, Pass through the host, and command the people”** – These officers are to inform the people of the LORD’s instructions so that they will know what to do.

**“saying, Prepare you victuals; for within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land”** – Joshua gives the people three days notice to prepare food for themselves that they can eat while on the move. In three days they will cross the Jordan River and enter the land of Canaan. They will not be visiting but will be entering in order to possess the land.

**“which the LORD your God giveth you to possess it”** – This military campaign is not something that Joshua decided was a good idea nor was it an effort on Israel’s part to take by force land that belonged to other nations. The LORD was giving them the land and therefore He would insure their victory over the inhabitants of the land. Israel would not merely reside there until another nation stronger than them came to take it away from them because the LORD had promised the land to Israel as an eternal inheritance that they will enjoy forever.

**Verses 12-18:** When Moses was still alive, the tribes of Reuben, Gad and half the tribe of Manassah had decided that they liked the land on the eastern side of Jordan (Canaan was on the west) and requested that it become their inheritance. Moses agreed as long as they provided their military strength to help the other tribes obtain their inheritance (Numbers 32). Joshua now reminds them of the commitment they made to Moses and these tribes promise to honor their agreement with Moses and to obey Joshua.