Jesus in the Promised Land – Joshua and Judges

1. The book of Joshua

a. The name of this book in Hebrew, Greek, and English comes from the principal character in it rather than from the writer. Joshua may or may not have been the writer of this book. The name Joshus means, "Yahweh saves" and is the Hebrew name that translates into Aramaic as Jesus.

b. As Joshua was to the Israelites in a smaller way so Jesus is to us in a much larger and complete way. Joshua brought God's people into the realisation of many of God's plans and purposes for them and this book is a record of God's deliverance of the Israelites into what He had promised them.

c. In our English Bible, Joshua is one of the historical books (Genesis through to Esther) however, in the Hebrew Bible, it is in the second of the three main divisions of the Old Testament i.e. the Prophets. Joshua is the first book in the first half of the Prophets (the Former Prophets) which contains Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings. The second division, the Latter Prophets contains Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve minor prophets.

d. The fact that the Hebrews included mainly historical books such as Joshua in the Prophets section reveals a basic attitude of God's people. They viewed what God revealed here not primarily as a historical record as much as an authoritative record of selected historical events designed to teach important spiritual lessons.

e. We should recognise Joshua, therefore, not simply as a record of history but as a selective history intended to reveal God's will. In the Prophets section of the Old Testament, God revealed Himself through historical events as well as through the oracles of individual prophets.

2. Crossing into the Promised Land

Joshua 1:1-9 *After Moses the Lord's servant died, the Lord said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' assistant: [2] "Moses my servant is dead. Get ready! Cross the Jordan River. Lead these people into the land that I am ready to hand over to them. [3] I am handing over to you every place you set foot, as I promised Moses. [4] Your territory will extend from the desert in the south to Lebanon in the north. It will extend all the way to the great River Euphrates in the east (including all Syria) and all the way to the Mediterranean Sea in the west. [5] No one will be able to resist you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not abandon you or leave you alone. [6] Be strong and brave! You must lead these people in the conquest of this land that I solemnly promised their ancestors I would hand over to them. [7] Make sure you are very strong and brave! Carefully obey all the law my servant Moses charged you to keep. Do not swerve from it to the right or to the left, so that you may be successful in all you do. [8] This law scroll must not leave your lips. You must memorize it day and night so you can carefully obey all that is written in it. Then you will prosper and be successful. [9] I repeat, be strong and brave! Don't be afraid and don't panic, for I, the Lord your God, am with you in all you do."*

a. Moses had led Israel for a generation, and God had proven again and again that he was the chosen deliverer for His people. But Moses died before getting to the Promised Land, and it was left to Joshua to take the people in.

b. Joshua had spent years listening for God's voice and following Moses' lead. In terms of leadership skills, he was ready. But was he ready emotionally? And were the people willing to follow him after following Moses all those years? Only after God gave Joshua plenty of encouragement and extravagant promises, and then demonstrated to the people that Moses' authority had fallen to his successor.

c. It's significant that as great as Moses was, he would never be known as the one who led Israel into the promise. Like the law God gave through him, he could only lead up to the promise, not into it.

d. The law can't deliver anyone into the rich promises of God. Only the rich grace of God can do that. The Promised Land is given, not earned or achieved. And the names of both Joshua and Jesus affirm that God is the author of the journey and ensures its ultimate success.

e. In many respects, it's not hard to envision Joshua as a picture of Jesus. Both are described as humble, yet both are seen as victorious commanders of God's armies. Both appointed 12 men as leaders under them. Both promised an inheritance to God's people. And both are said to have led God's people into a place of rest and abundance.

f. But Joshua's victories were partial and temporary; Israel's territory expanded and contracted several times in the centuries after his death. Not so with the Messiah, whose kingdom never ceases to expand.

Isaiah 9:7 *His dominion will be vast, and he will bring immeasurable prosperity.He will rule on David's throne and over David's kingdom, establishing it and strengthening it by promoting justice and fairness, from this time forward and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of Heaven's Armies will accomplish this.*

g. Subsequent generations soon forgot God's faithfulness to their forefathers, with the result that they lost much of what Joshua and their people had gained. By contrast, Jesus' victories are decisive and forever. Only Jesus can lead people into the Promised Land of true abundance and fruitfulness, where the land flows with much more satisfying milk and honey and people really do live in safety and security. Whatever God promised for His people long ago in the Promised Land, He fulfils in much greater and more ultimate terms in Jesus. Just as Joshua led Israel into their Promised Land, Jesus leads His followers into the fullness of all God's glorious promises.

Heb.4:8-9 *For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken afterward about another day. **9** Consequently a Sabbath rest remains for the people of God.*

3. Commander of the Lord's Armies

a. Having entered into the Promised Land one of the first challenges Joshua faced was the battle for Jericho. Jericho was a well-fortified city with thick walls and plenty of warriors. Because attacking such a city must have been an intimidating prospect for Israel's people, God told Joshua numerous times to be strong and courageous, and relayed the message to his army and the general population. Militarily, they were overmatched. By human standards, the situation looked impossible.

b. But not long before Israel's battle against Jericho, Joshua encountered a man with a drawn sword. He was a divine visitor, a messenger with a larger purpose than the battle at hand.

Joshua 5:13-15 *When Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him holding a drawn sword. Joshua approached him and asked him, "Are you on our side or allied with our enemies?" [14] He answered, "Truly I am the commander of the Lord's army. Now I have arrived!" Joshua bowed down with his face to the ground and asked, "What does my master want to say to his servant?" [15] The commander of the Lord's army answered Joshua, "Remove your sandals from your feet, because the place where you stand is holy." Joshua did so.*

a. When Joshua asked him whose side he was on, the divine messenger did not respond. He simply stated that he was the commander of the Lord's army. By coming with His sword drawn (v. 13) He is showing Joshua that He is coming to fight for Israel. God was going to fight this battle for them and He would lead them and fight for them as long as they stayed true to Him.

b. The whole of the following chapters are an account of how God fought for them. It is not essentially a battle between the Israelites and the Canaanites but it is God's battle and the Israelites are either spectators or supporters of His battle.

c. Joshua' s response was to bow down in reverence and submission to an authority much higher than his own. Some think the commander of the Lord's army could have been an angel, but since he allowed Joshua to worship him, which an angel of God would never do it would seem that this is another pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus.

d. Jesus is the Lord of Hosts, **Adonai Tzva'ot**, one of the names of God which is used 235 times in the Bible. Some versions translate the phrase as "Lord of the Angel Armies". One of the passages of Scripture that so well paints this picture of the unseen reality for us is found in 2 Kings chapter 6.

2 Kings 6:15-17 *When the servant of the man of God rose early in the morning and went out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was all round the city. And the servant said, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" [16] He said, "Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." [17] Then Elisha prayed and said, "O Lord, please open his eyes that he may see." So the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all round Elisha.*

e. There is an invisible reality where battles are fought as Mike demonstrated last week as we looked at the mid (or second) heavens. Jesus is the captain of this army of angelic hosts who battle against the powers of darkness. Our response is to submit to the authority of Christ who has overcome and live our lives as He has taught us.

f. We now have a captain leading us and fighting for us. He is this same captain that appeared to Joshua, then led and fought for both him and Israel. But in order to receive the leadership of God and His power fighting for us, we must follow the example of Joshua and submit to Jesus' authority.

g. Jesus comes to win victories. No walls are too thick for Him, no army too strong. He demonstrated in the gospels that no matter how impossible a situation looks—even

as impossible as a sealed tomb—He can overcome it. When He enters the battle, everything changes. If He fights, He wins.

Col.2:15 *He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.*

h. As we engage in spiritual warfare in the prayer room we do so by submitting in worship to Jesus. By believing His promises and agreeing with His authority. By praying "Your Kingdom come and Your will be done." It is not our battle it is His and we affirm our allegiance to Him by aligning with His word and acknowledging His authority.

i. There is a day coming when we will see with our own eyes this great army being led by Captain Jesus and the final victory will be won.

Rev.19:11-16 *[11] Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. [12] His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. [13] He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. [14] And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. [15] From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. [16] On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.*

j. For now we live by faith, knowing as Elisha did, that there is a heavenly army at work for those who will worship and submit to the Lord of Hosts.

Eph.6:10-13 *Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. [11] Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. [12] For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. [13] Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.*

k. God would soon lead Joshua in a strategy that made absolutely no sense militarily. It looked absurd. The idea that marching around a city seven days in a row, 13 times in total, and adding some shouts and trumpet blasts could win the victory is laughable. Except that it was God's plan, and He backed it up with His power.

l. Centuries later, the idea that a Messiah could suffer and die by humiliating execution in order to conquer evil and overcome death appeared laughable too. But God backed it up with His power. The two commanders who met near Jericho before the battle had a lot in common. And the one who bowed learned how to win supernatural victories through the one who stood with a drawn sword.

m. In the same way as Joshua submitted to God's plan so we too need to submit to the plan that we read in Ephesians 6. We need to put on our armour, spiritual armour than enables us to stand and thus be included in the Lord's victory on that glorious day when He returns.

n. Jesus is the commander of God's armies and the source of victory over all enemies, including death. Like Joshua, we need to bow to Jesus and side with Him rather than

asking Him to side with us that we would experience *His victories* for *His kingdom* in every area of our life.

2 Chron.20:15 *And he said, "Listen, all Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem and King Jehoshaphat: Thus says the Lord to you, 'Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed at this great horde, for the battle is not yours but God's**.***

4. Our Warrior Saviour in Judges

a. The book of Judges tells of how God raised up 7 judges to save the Israelites from their enemies. Each of these judges were empowered by the Holy Spirit to win battles but were morally flawed and sinned. In each of the seven accounts we see God raise up a judge to deliver Israel but the people turn to other gods, so Israel becomes subject to other nations and so they call out to God who raises up a judge etc. etc.

b. Seven in the bible often points towards an ultimate fulfilment. So here, seven national saviours promise a final world saviour. Actually the book of Judges is the seventh book in both the Jewish and Christian structure of the Old Testament so we should expect it to promise something.

Heb.11:32-34 ***32*** *And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets—* ***33*** *who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,* ***34*** *quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.*

c. Perhaps the best translation of the word "Judges" from the Old Testament is Warrior-Saviour. In this unlikely book we can glimpse our own great Warrior-Saviour, Jesus, in the imperfect forms of heroic men and women who, at great personal risk and sacrifice, saved the nation of Israel from destruction.

Judges 2:11-12,16-18 *And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals.* ***12*** *And they abandoned the Lord, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt……****16*** *Then the Lord raised up judges, who saved them out of the hand of those who plundered them.* ***17*** *Yet they did not listen to their judges, for they whored after other gods and bowed down to them. They soon turned aside from the way in which their fathers had walked, who had obeyed the commandments of the Lord, and they did not do so.* ***18*** *Whenever the Lord raised up judges for them, the Lord was with the judge, and he saved them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge.*

d. This cycle of rebellion, oppression, and deliverance is not just Israel's story more than 3,000 years ago. It's also the story of the human race at almost any time. We all experience the consequences of sin and cry out to God in one way or another. Collectively, we have longed for a deliverer, even putting our hopes in unworthy ones from time to time.

e. God heard our cries and sent us one. Because many of the deliverers in the book of Judges are extremely flawed, it may seem like a stretch to see them as pictures of Jesus. But the fact that God hears our laments when we suffer the consequences of rebellion, forgives us, and sends help is a picture of the ultimate deliverance and help He provided in sending His Son.

f. We thoroughly deserved the consequences we suffered, but He gave us glory and freedom instead. He gave us the warrior King we longed for, and He overthrows the oppressors from our lives. He wages war with the truth and justice we need.

g. If there any areas of life in which we feel oppressed, regardless of the cause—whether of our own doing or the fault of others—God will respond to our cries for help. His desire to deliver us? All the cycles in Judges tell us that we are weak and fallen people but we have a Judge, who is a Warrior Deliverer, who will deliver us from evil.

h. There are no man-made messes from which God is unable to rescue the humble. So we can pray with confidence and faith that Jesus has the authority and power to deliver ourselves and others from self-inflicted trouble.

5. Conclusion

a. In these two prophetic/historic books we see the very heart of God at work through Jesus. He is the One who leads us into the promised land, who fights for us and delivers us from the enemy. It is <u>His battle</u>, it is by <u>His power</u> and it is for <u>His glory</u>.

b. In humility and trust our response is to bow down in worship and adoration submitting our lives to His will and purpose. Our prayer, as He taught us, is:

Matt.6:9-13 *"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.[10] <u>Your kingdom come, your will be done</u>, on earth as it is in heaven. [11] Give us this day our daily bread, [12] and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.[13] And lead us not into temptation, but <u>deliver us from evil</u>.*