

Joshua: God's Weak Strong Man

A New Leader

Moses was gone. This great leader of the people of Israel had laid his hands on his assistant, Joshua, showing the people how God planned for leadership to transfer after his death.

God was there immediately; "Get up, Joshua. Yes," he told the young warrior, "the task ahead is truly a big one, but you and the Israelies will be able to do it, because I am going to be with you. Remember now, how I was with you long ago when Moses sent you and Caleb as two of the spies who looked over the Land of Promise. Then your courage was apparent when you gave your report back to the people. Of course, they let fear hold them back, then." Knowing how Joshua felt, he went on, "Just be sure to remember my law, and teach the people its truths, too. Don't be worried. I will walk with you. I will see that you are successful. I promise that every place you walk on shall be part of Israel's property soon."

It was not long until Joshua, feeling much braver, sent two men into the land of promise, to see how many people were there, and how well equipped were their cities and armies. They went to Jericho, and by making a deal with Rahab the harlot, they were able to spy out the countryside before they came in with the Israelites and took over the city. They

learned that the very thought of them terrified people of the land because of the mighty things their God had been doing in their behalf. Their bravery was only exceeded by their eagerness.

Claiming God's Promised Land

The Israelis came to the city of Jericho. Surely enough, some of the men found the agreed-on red cord hanging from the window of Rahab's house on the wall; this house was spared in the battle that followed. The people of Israel were completely successful, even as God had promised Joshua. But the rest of the land of Promise still lay before them.

Next they planned to take the small city of Ai. It was here that Joshua learned an important fact: he must follow God's directions exactly. He had especially mentioned to His servant that no loot was to be taken when they captured Jericho. But one of the soldiers in the Israeli army stole several items and buried the treasure in his tent. God was very angry at this disobedience; the battle at Ai was lost by Israel, even though they had been very confident, because God does not reward this kind of behavior. Once the sin was discovered and taken care of, Joshua's men took the city rather easily.

And again Joshua was tricked by the people of Gibeon; after hearing about Jericho and Ai, they were eager to save their own city. A group, wearing old, worn out clothes and

carrying old equipment, told the Israelis that they were from a distant land, and wanted to make a peace treaty with them. Not wanting to take time to talk to God, Joshua signed the peace treaty, and was then unable to do any harm to the city, which was really nearby. Joshua always was to remember this important lesson: Do things right the first time; always be in God's plan.

"Don't be afraid of any of your enemies," said God. None of them will be able to stand against you." God spoke to Joshua, just as He had to Moses before. "Be strong, and have courage," He would say.

Joshua led the people in the possession of the Land of Promise, helping of the tribes get settled in their own spot. Only the priestly group had no land; they would busy themselves in the service of the temple rather than have farms. The other groups would take care of their needs.

Joshua Urges Continued Obedience to God

When Joshua was a very old man, he again called the people together to talk to them: "I am an old man and will soon die. God has been faithful to all His promises to you. He has helped you to possess the land he promised to your ancestors. Now what is your decision for the future? Will you continue to serve Him and fit into His plan for you? Or will you serve other gods that we know of--even if they are

not gods, really? I have decided, myself. My family and I will serve the God of Israel, Jehovah.

"We will serve him, too. We could NEVER serve other gods!" the people answered.

"God will not play around with sin or rebellion among you," Joshua warned.

And while he was alive, the Israelis remembered, and were faithful. Joshua lived to be 110 years old, continuing until his death to encourage courage and obedience to God.