

Lesson 1

Soul Survivors at Shipwreck Point

Memory Verse: “My help *cometh* from the LORD, which made heaven and earth,” Psalm 121:2.

Lesson Aim: The student will learn, like Joshua, to abide in God when he is fearful.

Life Application: When the student is fearful, he will ABIDE in God.

JOSHUA LEARNS TO OVERCOME HIS FEARS

Deuteronomy 31:7-13, 23; 34:5-9; Joshua 1:1-9

Introduction

The theme for this year’s VBS is entitled “**Soul Survivors on Danger Island.**” Before one can survive in the turmoil of today’s world, he must learn how to abide in God’s love and care. A genuine understanding of God and His dealing with mankind will be a valuable aid to every born-again believer.

The Christian life begins the moment one repents of sin (Luke 13:3, 5) and trusts Christ as Savior (John 1:11-13). It continues as one walks with God daily, communicates with Him in prayer, reads and studies the Word of God (Bible) and serves the Lord in one of His churches.

To survive the dangers in one’s spiritual life, one must ABIDE in God. The Bible will serve as a valuable tool in this endeavor as one reads and studies it regularly. One’s Bible study is improved by including the following books: a Bible commentary of one’s choice, a Bible dictionary, an exhaustive concordance, a Bible

atlas, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* and some individual study books on the various books of the Bible.

MOSES' LAST COUNSEL TO ALL ISRAEL

Deuteronomy 31:7-13, 23

Moses is giving his farewell message to the people of Israel. In so doing, he provided a continuity during the change in national leadership from himself to Joshua. Physically, Moses was still capable of leading the Israelites, but he had been forbidden to go into the Promised Land with the people (Num. 20:12). Long before that time, Joshua had been made the leader of the army of Israel (Ex. 17:9) and invested with some of Moses' authority (Num. 27:18-23). The deposit of a written copy of the Law with the priest (Deut. 31:9) symbolized the transfer of responsibility for enforcement of the Law to the priesthood. Moses then charged the nation of Israel to be obedient to the Law, to be "strong and of a good courage" and not to be afraid or terrified (verse 6).

After the charge to the people (verses 1-6), Moses commissioned Joshua to "be strong and of a good courage" (verse 7). Joshua would need to be strong and courageous inasmuch as he would lead the Israelites into the Promised Land. Indeed, Joshua proved to be a courageous leader.

Verses 9-13 reveal that a written copy of the Law was deposited with the priests. They were to read it annually as they observed the "feast of tabernacles" (verse 10). The priests were to gather the people of Israel together for this celebration. The Feasts of Tabernacles, or booths, was to remind the Israelites annually that they had been pilgrims in their journey from Egypt to Palestine. Hebrews 11:13 reveals that all these people died in faith and confessed that they were "strangers and pilgrims on the earth." Likewise, present-day believers are also pilgrims in this world, and we, too, must journey in faith until God calls us home. Thus, to abide in Him, His providence is needed. To do this, we are to "be strong and of a good courage." (See Deuteronomy 31:7, 23.)

THE DEATH OF MOSES

Deuteronomy 34:5-9

Although Moses was being disciplined for his act of unbelief (Num. 20:1-13) by not being allowed to enter the Promised Land, he died in faith and as an honored servant of the Lord.

Additionally, honor was given to Moses for the Lord Himself buried him. To this present time, no one knows where his grave is located. Although unknown, his burial was in Moab in the valley opposite Beth-peor. Moses was so special that his last days on earth were spent in intimate fellowship with God who did not permit any human being to take part in his burial (Deut. 34:5, 6). Moses died at the old age of one hundred twenty years (verse 7). His eyes were not dim, nor his natural force (strength) abated (verse 7). The Israelites mourned Moses' death for thirty days (verse 8). The normal time of mourning a dead loved one was seven days, but the Israelites went beyond this time frame as they mourned the death of their great leader.

Joshua was "full of the spirit of wisdom" (verse 9) for Moses had laid his hands upon him. This accompanied Moses' commissioning Joshua (Deut. 31:7). The "spirit of wisdom" refers to Joshua's inner spirit. God gave Joshua the supernatural strength and skill to lead the children of Israel into the Promised Land.

THE COMMISSIONING OF JOSHUA

Joshua 1:1-9

The commissioning of Joshua came after the death of Moses (Joshua 1:1).

Before Moses' death, Joshua was designated as his successor (Deut. 31:1-8). He had been an aide to Moses for many years. (See Exodus 24:13; 33:11; Numbers 11:28.) Joshua was from the tribe of Ephraim (Num. 13:8, 16) and lived to be one hundred ten years old (Joshua 24:29).

Joshua may have felt a sense of loneliness as he waited expectantly near the Jordan River to hear the voice of God giving him instructions as to how he was to lead the people of Israel. He was not disappointed. When God's servants take time to listen, He always communicates with them as He did with Joshua. In this present day, He usually speaks through His written Word—the Word of God. However, in Old Testament times, He spoke in dreams by night, in visions by day, through the high priest and occasionally, He spoke in an audible voice to His servants.

God spoke to Joshua audibly (Joshua 1:1-9).

The Lord reminded Joshua of Moses' death (verse 2). Therefore, Joshua was to assume immediate command of all the forces of people and lead them across the Jordan River and into the land

God was to give them. The borders of that land were established by the Lord God. They were to extend from the wilderness on the south to the Lebanese mountain range on the north and from the Euphrates River on the east to the great sea—the Mediterranean Sea—on the west (verse 4).

Joshua faced the tremendous task of conquering Canaan. Therefore, he needed a fresh word of encouragement from the Lord. The Lord informed Joshua that as He was with Moses, even so He would be with him (verse 5). The Lord also assured Joshua that He would not fail him, nor forsake him (verse 5).

The Lord then commanded Joshua to “be strong and of a good courage” (verse 6), being careful to obey all the Law of Moses (verse 7). He was further instructed to “turn not from it to the right hand or to the left” (verse 7). If Joshua would follow the Lord’s instruction, He would be with him and prosper him in this great undertaking (verse 7).

Joshua was again commanded to “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” (verse 9). Joshua was once again challenged to be both strong and courageous. He was also challenged to “be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed.” The word *dismayed* means “to disable with alarm or to depress the spirits or courage of a person.” The Lord did not want Joshua to become alarmed and fearful when he saw the obstacles involved in conquering Canaan. Neither did He want him to become depressed in spirit when all did not go well. Therefore, He promised him His presence again, stating that He would be with him whithersoever he went. Joshua’s life demonstrated, in a practical way, that he lived according to the teachings of the Law of Moses. It behooves present-day believers in the Lord to so live that the Lord might prosper them in their endeavors for Him.

What do present-day believers in Christ fear the most? Their list may include such things as storms that destroy their houses and property, famines that leave them without food, wars that take the lives of their sons and daughters, loss of their jobs which rob them of their livelihood, health issues which leave them without strength to continue their routine lives and death is a fearful event if they do not know the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior.

Jesus alerted mankind not to “fear” these things but rather to “fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt. 10:28). When the Word of God alerts Christians about fearing God, it implies a trusting respect for Him. Included in this respect should be a wholesome fear of how God chastens or cor-

rects His children for their disobedience. As true believers, God's children are to understand that in no way is their eternal security threatened by this chastisement. When one feels fearful, he is to ABIDE in God!

The Purpose of the Book of Joshua

The purpose of the book of Joshua is to give an official account of historical fulfillment of the Lord's promises to the patriarchs to give the people of Israel the land of Canaan by holy war. A holy war was a conflict with religious overtones rather than one with a political motivation of defense or expansion. This may be seen in both the opening charge (Joshua 1:2-6) and the concluding summary (Joshua 21:43).

Specifically, the conquest of Canaan under Joshua's leadership was based on the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 12:1-3). God, having dealt with all nations, made Abraham the center of His purposes and determined to reach the lost world through Abraham's seed. The Lord made a contract or covenant with Abraham, promising unconditionally to give a land, a posterity and spiritual blessings to the patriarch and his descendants. Soon thereafter God said He was giving the land to the people of Israel forever (Gen. 13:15-17). The boundaries of the land were given to Abraham (Gen. 15:18-21). Later, God affirmed that the rightful heirs to the Promised Land were Isaac and his descendants (Gen. 17:19-21). Thus the book of Joshua records the fulfillment of the patriarchal promise as Israel appropriated the land pledged to the nation by its faithful God centuries before. The people of Israel must possess the land forever according to the promise, something that awaits the return of the Messiah and the redemption of the nation of Israel. Joshua did, however, lead the nation of Israel to victory over its enemies and into possession of the Promised Land.

LIFE APPLICATION

When the student is fearful, he will ABIDE in God. This means he or she will not lose faith and fall away but will ABIDE in God's love and care. In so doing, one must apply the Word of God to his life! In reading the Word of God, ask three questions when applying it to your life:

1. What does it say to me?
2. What does it mean to me?
3. What am I going to do about it?

REFLECTIONS

- * Are you willing to do what God wants you to do?
- * Are you willing to follow God's leadership in your life?
- * What qualities must you possess to do God's will and work?
- * Do you need words of encouragement in your life?
- * Why do you need encouragement?



Second Timothy 1:7 declares, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."

