

## A 10,000 Foot View of the Book of Joshua

Let's turn together to **Joshua and read vv. 1:1-6**

For decades there have been mysterious crop circles popping up in various places around the world. Crop circles played an important part in one my favorite movies, *Signs*. How they're formed is still a mystery, but a crop circle is when corn fields are flattened in such a ways as to form patterns. Here are two pretty cool examples: **show slides**

The thing is if you stand in the middle of a crop circle you will see a lot of flattened corn but from the ground level you won't be able to see the intricate patterns. To see the beautiful, complex designs you need an aerial view. What you'll miss with a ground level view you'll see clearly with a 10,000 foot view.

This morning we begin a study of the book of Joshua called *A Journey of Faith*. Jewish tradition considered Joshua a prophetic book and I believe it has a prophetic word to speak to us, Grace Community Church, at this time. I believe the Lord has new land for us to take, new territory to conquer by faith in Jesus.

But before we begin this journey through the book of Joshua and consider what it has to say to us, I think it will benefit us to get high enough to get a 10,000 foot view of this amazing book and its place in the Bible. From that height we will see patterns and themes that give us an amazing picture of God's redemptive plan and we see a portrait of our Savior Jesus Christ. So let's pray and then start our ascent.

Look with me at verse 2: *Moses my servant is dead.*

This simple verse raises a question: ***why did God use Moses to lead Israel to the edge of the Promised Land and then not allow him to lead them into the Promised Land?***

When we look at it from a ground level perspective, it seems a little unfair that Moses, one of the greatest leaders of Israel, brought Israel so close and then wasn't allowed to finish the job he started. After all it was Moses who declared to Pharaoh, "let my people go!" it was Moses who was God's instrument to lead Israel out of bondage to Egypt and who raised his hands and the Red Sea parted. It was Moses who met with God and carried the ten commandments down from Mt. Sinai. It was Moses who led them within sight of the Promised Land.

And yet after all this why wasn't Moses given the satisfaction of leading his people into the land God had promised them? The ground level explanation is given in Numbers 20. The Israelites are in the desert and there's no water and they're complaining to Moses that they're going to die of thirst. This is the second time this has happened. The first time God told Moses to strike the rock at Horeb and it would gush water. This time God says speak to the rock and it will gush water, but Moses is angry and frustrated with his rebellious, complaining people and he strikes the rock twice. Water comes out but the Lord says to Moses, "*Because you did not believe in me, to uphold me as holy in the eyes of the people of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them.*" (Num. 20:12) Because Moses hit the rock when God told him to speak to the rock, he wouldn't be allowed to lead Israel into the Promised Land.

Deuteronomy 34 tells us of Moses' last days on earth. The Lord has him climb Mt. Nebo and God points out all the land to the horizon and says "that's the land I'm going to give to your descendants. You can see it, but you can't enter it." Moses dies with the Promised Land in his eyes. The Lord then holds a private funeral service for Moses, no one there but God. To this day no one but God knows where Moses was buried. It's touching and tender, but a little sad and maybe a little unfair. OK, so Moses got mad and hit the rock rather than speak to it (and yes that messed up the picture of Christ who would be struck once to provide living water, but afterwards we would need to ask him for living water) but Moses had good reason to be frustrated and no one is perfect. Seems like the punishment was worse than the crime. This is what we see when we look at it from a ground level perspective.

But let's fly over the same ground at 10,000 feet and surprisingly what we see is that Moses was never going to enter the promised land. It's not that Moses was all set to lead Israel into the Promised Land and then he blew it and God angrily took that privilege away from him. Moses wasn't meant to lead Israel into the Promised Land – Joshua was all along. From a 10,000 foot view what comes clear is this amazing truth pattern: Moses, as the Lawgiver, is a type of the law, and Joshua is a type of Jesus. In fact Jesus is the Greek version of the Hebrew name Joshua. So from 10,000 feet we see two truths that are central to the entire Bible story.

*1. The law will never get us in the promised land*

The promised land represents all the good promises of God to us: redemption, salvation, deliverance from our enemies, covenant relationship with God. The law can't get us into all this because the law has a fatal flaw.

I always find it amusing to read about old laws that are still on the books. Some of them are pretty crazy!

- In Indiana it's against the law to attend a movie within four hours of eating garlic.
- In Nebraska a parent can be arrested if their child doesn't hold back a burp during a church service.
- In NY it is illegal for a person to transport an ice cream cone in their pockets on Sunday.
- While we're talking about our beloved state, NY also has a law that prohibits men from turning around on a city street to look "at a woman in that way" (as it puts it). A man twice convicted of this is mandated to wear a pair of horse-blinders when he goes outside. So if you see a guy walking on Market St with horse-blinders on, well, you know he messed up.

Maybe at one time these laws made sense but to us they are outdated, useless, and, frankly, bad law. When I say the law of Moses has a fatal flaw, do I mean that it's also outdated, useless, bad law?

Not at all. The law of Moses is good. Jesus said he didn't come to abolish the law but to fulfill it. The law could get us into heaven – it really could...if we could keep it. The fatal flaw with the law is us. We can't keep it. And the law has no power to help us keep it. It can tell us what is right but it can't make us do what is right. It can tell us the qualifications for heaven, but it can't qualify us to enter heaven.

*Legalism can't make us righteous*

Legalism comes in many forms but at its core it's trying to earn our way into God's favor by our own works. In Moses' day it was keeping the Sabbath, not eating certain ceremonially unclean foods, and

other requirements of the law. Today it can be things like don't go to the movies, don't get a tattoo, guys don't grow your hair long, women don't wear pants, don't drink alcohol, don't listen to music with a rock beat, and so on. Churches can have a whole list of unwritten rules you need to keep to be in good with God. They emphasize performance (what we do) as the basis for God's approval and acceptance.

There are believers and churches that are openly legalistic, even Pharisaical in how they judge people who don't measure up. Self-righteous about their superior spiritual maturity, they look down at anyone who doesn't keep their standards. It's what legalists do: the Pharisees actually looked down their nose at Jesus as inferior because he didn't keep their standards their way.

### **Undercover legalists**

This open legalism is pretty easy to spot, but we also need to watch out for what I'm going to call "undercover legalism". Undercover legalism is when we love grace and talk grace and give grace – to everyone else. But in our own heads we constantly hear a voice saying, "you're not doing enough. You're not good enough. You're not measuring up, you're not doing it right. How could God accept you when you keep failing and falling short?"

We don't give the grace to ourselves that we give to others. Legalism is so hard-wired we sometimes don't even know we're doing this. The 10,000 foot view of Joshua tells us that the law can never, ever get us into the promised land, not because there's a problem with the law but because there's a problem with us. We are lawbreakers and the law has no power to turn us into law-keepers. That brings us to the second beautiful truth that comes clear from 10,000 feet:

2. *Joshua is a type of Jesus, the only one who can get us into the promised land*

*Joshua 1:2-6*

The name Joshua means *Jehovah saves*. God chose Joshua to lead His people into the promised land as a pointer to the ultimate Joshua – Jesus – who would lead his people into the promised land of eternal life and heaven. The law (represented by Moses) could never save us but Jesus (represented by Joshua) is *Jehovah our salvation*.

I just want to fly over this truth again and point out the clear biblical pattern God has written in the big story of the Bible: Moses and the law represented our receiving God's promises based on our work. Our keeping the law. And that was never going to happen because we are sinners, we are lawbreakers.

So God gave us Jesus who would do the work to earn the promises of God for us, and give them to us as a gift. Eternal life, salvation, redemption, adoption, reconciliation with God, the Holy Spirit residing in us, being built into a people of God together, covenant relationship with God. All of this given to us freely by grace through faith. What work do we do to receive all this? No work at all. We rest in what Christ has done for us.

<sup>8</sup> For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. <sup>9</sup> So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, <sup>10</sup> for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. *Hebrews 4:8-10*

In Christ we rest from our works. The legalism that says, “do this and do that and do the next thing to be acceptable to God” can never get us into the promised land. Only Christ can. There’s nothing we can add, no work we could do, that would contribute to the salvation Christ has purchased for us so we rest from works and believe in Christ, our Sabbath rest.

If legalism is something you struggle with, maybe you grew up in a legalistic tradition, and you constantly hear an inner voice condemning your performance as being inadequate, maybe you’re an undercover legalist who gives grace to others but lives with a voice that’s always telling you you’re not good enough, not righteous enough, not doing enough, let me be honest with you. I hear that voice too. I can preach Jesus and his amazing grace to others and then hear a voice that tells me I don’t measure up. I’m not doing enough, not good enough, not anything *enough*.

We will never silence that voice by working harder. We’ll never be enough. We can only silence that voice by agreeing with it. “You’re right, I don’t measure up. I’m not doing enough. I’m not good enough. I freely confess it. But I confess this also: Jesus is enough and has done enough to lead me into the promised land. I’m trusting in Jesus and resting in Jesus. So legalistic voice in my head: shut up!”

I realize someone may ask, *but aren’t we supposed to do the work of the Lord? Aren’t we co-laborers with Christ? Isn’t there work to do? You make it sound like becoming a Christian means taking an early retirement and playing shuffleboard for the rest of our lives.* I’m glad you asked that question.

God has work for us to do. It’s my prayer that God speaks a prophetic word to us through Joshua about taking new land for Christ. Two things in the coming year: that our love and fellowship with one another might grow deeper and that our witness to those who don’t know Christ might grow bolder. Is that work? Yes! And I look forward to it! Take some Pig Roast invites – I challenge everyone of us to distribute 25. Take about a half hour just putting them in doors. Easy, but it’s work. God has called us to work.

But when it comes to our salvation we don’t lift a finger. We work with God’s favor, not to earn God’s favor. We work because we are citizens of heaven, not to become citizens of heaven. We work as beloved children of God, not to become beloved children of God. Christ and Christ alone has done all the work to secure our home in the Promised Land. When it comes to our salvation, we rest in him.

*My hope is built on nothing less  
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness  
I dare not trust the sweetest frame  
But wholly lean on Jesus' name*

*On Christ the solid Rock I stand  
All other ground is sinking sand  
All other ground is sinking sand*