

## Conquest Joshua to Yeshua

**If you are visiting, either in person or online,** this will be a different Resurrection Sunday sermon. I won't be preaching directly from one of the resurrection accounts in the gospels. We are reading and preaching through the Bible this year Chronologically. This week we are in the book of **Joshua**. If you **notice the title** of this sermon, it will give you a hint. **Conquest is the section of the Biblical story that we are in now.** This means the nation of Israel has entered the promised land, Canaan, and are in the process of conquering the people that are living there.

**Does this mean that we are not going to talk about the resurrection of Jesus today?** No, we absolutely are, but **we are going to do that by looking back at how God was directing his people before Jesus came,** taught about the Kingdom, died, and was resurrected. What we are reading today is **pointing toward the empty tomb that we celebrate today** in our worship.

**That brings us to today's story of Joshua,** who has been given the position that Moses had. Abraham died looking over the land from a mountain. **Joshua is now doing the same things Moses did, faithfully leading** the people by telling them everything God wants them to know. The difference is **now they are in the promised land** and have conquered part of it.

**Here's the scene, Joshua has everyone in this valley** between two mountains where they see him do something very important and hear him say some very important things to them. Here we go. **Then Joshua built an altar to the Lord, the God of Israel, on Mount Ebal.<sup>31</sup> He followed the commands that Moses the Lord's servant had written in the Book of Instruction: "Make me an altar from stones that are uncut and have not been shaped with iron tools." Then on the altar they presented burnt offerings and peace offerings to the Lord.<sup>32</sup> And as the Israelites watched, Joshua copied onto the stones of the altar the instructions Moses had given them.<sup>33</sup> Then all the Israelites—foreigners and native-born alike—along with the elders, officers, and judges, were divided into two groups. One group stood in front of Mount Gerizim, the other in front of Mount Ebal. Each group faced the other, and between them stood the Levitical priests carrying the Ark of the Lord's Covenant. This was all done according to the commands that Moses, the servant of the Lord, had previously given for blessing the people of Israel.<sup>34</sup> Joshua then read to them all the blessings and curses Moses had written in the Book of Instruction.<sup>35</sup> Every word of every command that Moses had ever given was read to the entire assembly of Israel, including the women and children and the foreigners who lived among them. Joshua 8:30-35**

**This is where the nation of Israel renews the covenant with God. What is this covenant? It is God choosing the ancestors of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob which becomes the nation of Israel as his very own people out of all the people groups in the world. God initiates this and his side of it is ironclad. The question is always, will the people do their part?**

The covenant has four main parts.

1. I will be your God and you will be my people.
2. I will make you a great nation.
3. I will give you a land of your own, Canaan the land of Abraham.
4. I will make you a blessing to all the other people that I didn't choose by making you an example to know me and please me.

**Joshua is reminding the people about their part of the covenant to have no other gods, to be loyal to God alone, trusting him and obeying his commands. He will then do these four things for Israel.**

**When I think of renewing something, I think about a subscription to something like a streaming service. I've used Prime Video for a year; do I like it, and will I renew or will I say, "no thank you" and try something else. This isn't what is happening. It's not like their agreement to the covenant back with Moses, when he read it and they also cheered and said, "sign me up," only had a 12-month shelf life. They aren't going to do this every year, so Israel can evaluate if they really want this.**

**If the old agreement isn't null and void, then why do they need to renew the covenant between these two mountains with everyone there, even foreigners. That is the question...Why renew their covenant with God? Other than because God told Moses to tell Joshua to do this. In and of itself, that's enough, but why does God ask them to do it?**

Here's what we can get from the story we just read. They need to do this because...Change in circumstances demands it.

**These people are coming from roaming the wilderness as a group. No neighbors, very little outside influence. Those who had been influenced most by their time in Egypt are probably all dead after forty years of wandering.**

**But now, they enter a land where there are people who worship false gods and do things that Yahweh prohibits and finds disgusting. God has already pronounced judgment on the Canaanites because of the extreme wickedness that even goes to the extreme of sacrificing children to their false gods as well as shrine prostitutes at the places of worship.**

**You will have no other gods before me was easier, but now they have options, and they have peer pressure. They aren't going to completely drive these**

people out of the land which is what they were supposed to do. **They are going to become a melting pot with them.** Even though they have been warned, **they will marry into these Canaanite families** who are bringing their belief system with them. **And after all, they need to be good neighbors, open minded, live and let live people.** If they want to employ a prostitute at their holy site, **then who am I to judge?**

**They're supposed to make judgements about belief, behavior, and relationships, based upon Yahweh being their God exclusively.** They are to influence the Canaanites, not the other way around. **They are to love the lord their god with all their heart, soul, and strength,** with their everything, and then his part is that he will make them a great nation and give them the land. **Have you become indistinguishable within the culture?** There was such a push to be relevant to the culture. **Our relevance and blessing to the culture are when we point them to the God who loves them and wants to be in relationship with them.** That is Jesus, the one who was dead and is now alive. **If we learn to live differently, like him, and love people sacrificially like him, then relevance will be no problem.** The culture will be able to better tolerate the ways that we think are wrong or sinful. **Not because we are yelling at them, but because we love them, even with their sin.**

**Are you entering a new season where things are changing in your circumstances?** Maybe it's not as extreme as starting a new country. **But what is ahead is going to be changing, different, and you will need to renew your covenant with Jesus.**

**Why renew their covenant?** Their situation is changing drastically and what obedience looks like will be different. New challenges that they haven't met before are just around the corner. Now is the time. **This is also the perfect time because...Renewal forces an honest look at the past.**

**They have to look back, not in sentimentality, but to see clearly and acknowledge** that when they obeyed God he was faithful and what he said he would do, he did. **They must see that God has been good to them and that he wants to be good in the future.**

Pausing to look back is important. In college, I learned that you **never throw away a test or quiz.** **Why?** Because before the final exam, the best way to study is to look back at what was important earlier, because it will be important again.

**They pause in the work of taking the land and look back at how they got there.**

**It's important to look back when you renew, because people are prone to forget the most important things that made them who they are. This is how we get our bearing when things are changing at light speed. The person who refuses to do this will forget what God has done for them and forget the stupid things they have done. Those stupid things, they will repeat. Read the rest of the Old Testament with us and you will see.**

**This is the perfect time for Israel to renew their covenant with God. Obedience will look different in this different place, and they will have a chance to, and they must be reminded of God's goodness and their stupidity. But also, because renewal...Encourages establishing reminders for the future.**

**Those who were present there that day have a collective memory. That is powerful for any group to share, not only a memory, but a defining memory. They can talk within their families about that amazing day that Joshua, their hero and leader, wrote out the law on stones of an altar and then read Moses' words to them. They remembered the rock they sat on, who was beside them, and the breeze blowing through that valley between those two mountains. They would never forget the majesty of that crowd, thousands of people.**

**But there was that altar and those words from God carved in rocks. These were physical reminders in the land so that the land could remind them of their promise to God and his to them. I can imagine family camping trips to that valley where Dad and Mom recite what this all means and how they "carried you on my back up to that big rock." Dad would recite what Moses said and how it felt to hear that in such a crowd. Mom says that she has not done anything or experienced anything in her life that came close to that time.**

**We need things to jog our memory so that we can snap out of the haze that our busy lives create. We need something that stands out that can't be ignored or dismissed. These were a monument to God's promise and Israel's responsibility.**

**Those monuments are reminders that are meant, not for sentimental trips down memory lane, but to be a fly in the ointment. They are to beg the question, have I been faithful to my part? Would the person I was at that time want to smack me upside the head and say, "Act like you have some sense, like you know who you are."**

**I have a tattoo on my chest that says, "Fought the good fight, finished the race, remained faithful" with a blue Q over the top. I designed it myself and it reminds me that I had twenty years to observe someone who served God with passion and who ended well. I have a ring on my finger that is to remind me that I made a covenant with Robin to remain faithful, share life, and serve, like Christ served**

the church. **I can look at either of those and they help me snap out of it, thinking it's all about me.**

**I want you to do something with me.** I'm going to ask you to close your eyes and use your imagination. **We are going to ask the Holy Spirit to work** in that playground. **I'm going to ask you to remember something.** When you do, I want you to remember what you were **thinking, feeling, seeing, hearing, even smelling.** But I want you to picture that Jesus was right there.

**Remember the time when you realized that you needed God and you turned to him?** Can you picture the scene, at church, your bedroom, by a lake, at summer camp, or having coffee with a good friend.

- Remember your baptism...remember what he has done for you.
- Baby dedications.
- **When the church or a specific brother or sister in Christ came through for you.**

**I think we are getting the idea that renewing their covenant was a good idea.** They are heading into uncharted territory, the need to look at God's faithfulness in the past and put down some markers that will jog their memory about their promise to God. But also...**Renewal helps us assess our resolve.**

**Give a darn level...how much resistance or heartache or disappointment or distraction will it take for you to throw up your hands and give up?**

**What is your give a darn level in remaining faithful to God?** I remember in **youth ministry** there would be kids who were involved, and you think something is really happening. And then they either get a **new boyfriend** or start a **new job** and you never see them again.

What this thing was supposed to lead them to was a place where the renewal of the covenant...**Urges us on with confidence.** Joshua's "be strong" and Paul's Ephesian 6:10-20

**If they don't have confidence after this time** between these two mountains, after looking back and preparing for a new season in the promised land, **then they never will.**

**If we don't have confidence here today on resurrection Sunday** that God will do what he said he would, and that he will give me what I need to remain faithful, then we never will.

- 2.5 coffee shops.
- A 2<sup>nd</sup> campus in a county with a lot of needs.
- An opportunity to plant a church in Florida.
- Preparing pastors in Uganda.
- We are making disciples like never before.

**There's good reason to be confident** in what God can do, to be strong and courageous.

Here's how Joshua receives confidence. <sup>6</sup> **"Be strong and courageous, for you are the one who will lead these people to possess all the land I swore to their ancestors I would give them.** <sup>7</sup> **Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the instructions Moses gave you. Do not deviate from them, turning either to the right or to the left. Then you will be successful in everything you do.** <sup>8</sup> **Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do.** <sup>9</sup> **This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."** Joshua 1:6-9

**Confidence isn't just about getting the crowd pumped up.** It's a continual focus on **God's words** to his people. He will have **confidence in how to navigate** this new world around all these pagan people and their false gods **if you study God's words** to him and meditate on them.

**If you ignore the places where God speaks today, his word, his people, his spirit, and his creation, then you have no one to blame for your lack of resolve and your lack of confidence.** Come on, **Jesus is alive** and there's **plenty of evidence** of that if you're paying attention.

Paul picks up this theme of confidence to a church in Ephesus that is going to get plenty or resistance from the culture around them. <sup>10</sup> **A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.** <sup>11</sup> **Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil.** <sup>12</sup> **For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.** Ephesians 6:10-12

Israel and Eagle Ridge need to stand firm in times of change.

**Jesus initiates a new covenant where He is not simply a messenger, but also the message.**

This is where we get to the second part of the title. **Unless you fell asleep, you know who Joshua is.** Yes, as the song goes he, "fought the battle of Jericho." Joshua comes from the same Hebrew root name as Yeshua. **And Yeshua is how to say Jesus in Hebrew.**

**Moses and then Joshua faithfully gave God's words, his message to the people. But Jesus was the message, the spoken word of God. In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God.** <sup>2</sup> **He existed in the beginning with God.** <sup>3</sup> **God created everything through him, and**

nothing was created except through him. <sup>4</sup> **The Word** gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone. <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it. John 1:1-5

Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. <sup>2</sup> **And now in these final days, he has spoken to us through his Son.** God promised everything to the Son as an inheritance, and through the Son he created the universe. <sup>3</sup> **The Son radiates God's own glory and expresses the very character of God,** and he sustains everything by the mighty power of his command. When he had cleansed us from our sins, he sat down in the place of honor at the right hand of the majestic God in heaven. Hebrews 1:1-3

- **Jesus didn't have a message about sacrifice, he was the message.**
- **Jesus didn't bring God's law to people; he was God's law.** Life in him is faithfulness to God's laws.
- **Jesus didn't bring a new covenant, he was the new covenant.** Those in him **are the new Israel,** the people of promise.
- **Jesus didn't come to show us how to conquer a piece of land to give to his people he conquered, our only real enemy, death.**

**Yes, Joshua conquered Jericho and many other parts of Canaan, but Yeshua, Jesus, conquered death, the ultimate enemy.** He didn't just die for your sins; he conquered the consequence of your sin.

**Do we want to live like post resurrection people who not only hear God's word, but have it written on their hearts?**

**Joshua was announcing some really good news to the people.** They were renewing the covenant now as they stand in the land promised to them by Yahweh. **He was announcing to them that God would be faithful to his promise. But they must respond by doing their part.** If they are devoted to God and **give their allegiance to Him alone** and do not chase after the gods of the people in the land they are taking, then all will be fine. **They must keep their side of the covenant by being exclusively God's people who trust and obey his words.** This is only good news, unless they decide to walk away from God and chase after other ways of living. Then the blessing becomes a curse. **It's the same for us!**

**If it was a good idea for the Israelites,** then sitting in the valley between two mountains, then it's a good idea for us on this resurrection day. **I call our response, Following Joshua to Yeshua.**

I'm going to read to you what the Bible calls the Gospel, or the good news that Jesus announced to us.

That Good News, the Gospel is this...

- The kingdom of God has been ushered in through Jesus of Nazareth.
- Jesus is Christ, the King, God in a human body.
- This Jesus suffered and died on a cross and on the third day was resurrected according to the scriptures.
- Through Jesus' sacrificial death and God's grace, the separation between people and their creator was bridged.
- Therefore, anyone who repents of their sin, believes the good news and demonstrates this belief by following Jesus, God rescues.
- It is only through the Holy Spirit that we are able to live this new life as Jesus' disciples.
- When King Jesus returns, as He promised on the Day of Judgement, everyone who is following Him will enter into God's eternal Kingdom.

**Those who have responded to this gospel and have been rescued by Jesus are now to consider themselves as Jesus' disciples, his very own special people. We are the recipients of this new covenant as his very own people, the new Israel. As disciples we are to...**

- follow Jesus obediently no matter the cost.
- cooperate with Holy Spirit as he changes us into people who live and love like Jesus
- renew our commitment to Jesus' mission of making his kingdom present and helping people learn how to follow him.

**As Jesus' disciples, we leave this place as his ambassadors wherever God places us. He is risen, He is risen indeed!**