

CSI Joshua

Strength and Courage

Joshua 1:1-9

July 11, 2010

I am here as part of an ongoing investigation into the life and character of a certain – Joshua, Son of Nun. Pieces of his life are described in the sixth book of which was dedicated to this man they called Joshua. I am not sure how familiar you are with this individual, but I assume many of you would consider him a great Godly man, a part of the people of God, a believer - one of you, in fact. Suffice it to say, an investigation has been long under way as to the true nature and identity of this man named Joshua.

I am going to present to you some of our findings about the identity of this Joshua. More importantly I am going to show you how I believe he got to be the way he was. If we figure out what he believed, and where those beliefs came from, we are then very likely to understand how he ended up the way he did. Your task is to verify if the findings are in fact consistent with someone who you would recognize as part of the people of God. Also, there is one more thing before we get started. This investigation has been deemed classified. You were never asked these questions, and I was never here, understood? Good. Okay, Here we go.

According to our records, Joshua was born sometime around 1480 BC. We calculate this by looking at his contemporary, Caleb, whose year of birth is better known. Joshua, like his parents and their parents, was born into slavery in Egypt and the Egyptians were quite cruel. While we don't know all the details of this time, what we do know is that things were harsh enough to get YHWH, the God of Israel's attention. It is recorded in Exodus 3:7 that The God of Abraham himself described the current state of Israel using such words as 'affliction' 'suffering', and that he heard their 'cries for help.'

Joshua was not only subjected to this suffering himself, but he also grew up watching those he loved, struggle with this affliction. He probably saw some of his friends being beaten, perhaps even family members. And yet,

growing up as a Jew, he was most certainly taught about the God of his forefathers. And he like many of his kinsmen, endured the violence with waiting expectation... No doubt the question 'when is God going to vindicate us from this' entered their minds more than a few times while working in those fields. This is why the end of Exodus chapter 4 says that the elders of Israel believed this man called Moses, who came and told them about God hearing their affliction, and the great Rescue that would come.

Think about it... what would happen if you saw what he saw? The main water supply turned into blood. Swarms of frogs, gnats, flies, and locusts. Just imagine that you have been enslaved.... These people have tormented you and your family for years.... And then a man comes and says that he is on a mission from God, and God is going to free you from this oppression... and suddenly, terrible, unbelievable things start to happen, but only to your oppressors... all of their livestock dies, but yours is fine. Hail comes down on them, but not on you. Flesh blistering boils and Darkness come upon them, but there is light where you are. And Finally, because these slave drivers still refuse to let you go, every firstborn from among them dies overnight, and then there's the event at the Red Sea and yet, God has spared you and your sons and daughters, what would living through such an experience do to you? how would it change you?

In that moment, I believe something sprouted in Joshua. A new belief formed in him, which I think fits both these experiences, and the experiences and attitudes expressed later on in Joshua's life... I believe that after all that Joshua firmly owned the notion that

My God is capable of far more than I can even imagine.

Does this notion resonate with you? do you believe that God is capable of far more than you can imagine? That he is all powerful, and that he uses that power to interact in this world? If you agree with this, let me see a show of hands. Thank you.

Joshua was known for his Military leadership of Israel's forces and along with His undercover spy missions, set him apart from many of the others found in the OT. According to the records, Joshua's first Battle, at least since the Red Sea crossing, was against Amalek. He was hand selected by Moses for this task, and he had no hesitation in accepting it. Joshua, along with Many men from Israel, went out to fight Amalek. We know 2 things about this battle. 1. we know that the victory went to Joshua and his men. And 2, we know that the victory was caused by God, not by men. Exodus 17 gives an account about how Moses along with some others went up to the top of a hill, presumably one in which he could see the battle from. Whenever Moses held up his hands to the Lord, the Israelite army prevailed. But he eventually became tired... and when he lowered his hands... the Israelites began to lose. Joshua knew that it was not his or his men's efforts that one this battle... It was God's. Similarly, this is further enforced by what took place some time after this.

They had just returned from their mission, 12 of them in all, including Joshua. The people were eager for a report, and one of the spies stepped up and began to tell of the beauties of this place, this Promised Land filled with wonders that far exceeded even Egypt. But, another spy came forward and began to tell of the great warriors who inhabited the land; Giants, who built great cities - Inhabitants that numbered far more than the Israelites. Another spy confirmed this, then another. One-by-one they gave ill report, everyone of them except Caleb and Joshua and the people became exceedingly discouraged. The people rebelled... they freaked out, even going so far as to suggest that they should return to Egypt. In the end, all of the spies died except for Caleb and Joshua, along with those people who did not believe that God would come through when he said he would give them the Promised Land.

When the spies came back, and they were giving their ill reports, and the people began to rebel... the book of Numbers, chapter 14 verses 6-9 records a speech: the book of numbers, chapter 14, verses 6-9:

⁶ *Two of the men who had explored the land, Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, tore their clothing.* ⁷ *They said to all the people of Israel,*

"The land we traveled through and explored is a wonderful land! ⁸ And if the LORD is pleased with us, he will bring us safely into that land and give it to us. It is a rich land flowing with milk and honey. ⁹ Do not rebel against the LORD, and don't be afraid of the people of the land. They are only helpless prey to us! They have no protection, but the LORD is with us! Don't be afraid of them!"

I believe that this, especially verse 8, combined with the other supernaturally inspired victories in Joshua's life, is substantial evidence to conclude that Joshua believed:

If God is for you, nothing can stand against you.

And my hunch is that this was not something he casually believed intellectually, but something he would stake his life on.

This belief that if God is for you, that nothing can come against, nothing can take you out, whether it be a great army of soldiers, or a boss at work, or a bill that keeps coming back to haunt.... If God is for you, you can accomplish anything, because there is no obstacle that can compare... do you, as the people of God, affirm this notion within your community? If so, please raise your hand. Thank you.

Now Joshua, had a mentor. Someone he looked up to, and learned from for many years. The connection can be traced all the way back to Egypt. How it started is not clear. What is clear is that soon after the exodus Joshua became Moses' official assistant, or Minister as some texts have it. Unless Joshua was out to war or on some other kind of Assignment, he could most likely be found by Moses' side. Even to the point where no one else could be.

There is a report in exodus 24:13 of a when God called out to Moses and said that he alone was to come up the mountain, to approach him... And, it then reads 'So Moses rose with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up into the mountain of God.' It illustrates something that I think is vital: Joshua saw firsthand just how special the relationship was between God

and Moses, and this information would come to revisit him sooner than I think he expected.

Joshua gets this glimpse into just how special the relationship between Moses and God was. And this, brings us to the beginning of the book of Joshua. In the beginning of the Book of Joshua, Moses has just died, and Joshua is being commissioned by God to take his place. A formal commissioning by Moses took place earlier, but here is where the replacement really happens. Joshua 1:1-5

Allow me to pause there, and repeat that last line. God says to Joshua, 'I will be with you as I was with Moses, I will not fail you or abandon you. There is no better living breathing example that God could have given to Joshua of his dedication and faithfulness. After all, Joshua saw first hand how close God and Moses were... and to now have it declared that he will be like that? I believe that from this, and from what we see throughout the rest of our records, that along with the other two beliefs you affirmed today, that Joshua believed whole heartedly this powerful notion:

God will always be by my side.

Is this something that you as a person of God believe in? Is it simply an intellectual notion? Or do you truly believe this with the kind of strength that would make you stake your life on it? If you do, would you please raise your hand. Thank you.

Joshua 1:6-9

Well, you see, we are just beginning this investigation, and what we see at the beginning is that God tells Joshua to be "Strong and courageous" 3 times. 3 times within the first 9 vs. We assume that after all that Joshua had been through, he would already be strong and courageous, or if he wasn't, how could these simple words make him be so? You see, when it comes to character traits, and certain other characteristics of human beings, you can't just decide to do them. What I mean is, behavioral and identity characteristics are usually the result of the cumulative beliefs pertaining to that certain trait. Take trust, for instance. Trust is not something you can

just turn on or off, especially if someone has broken that Trust. Trust happens as a result of your experiences. These experiences lead to certain beliefs about a person or situation: they are good, they keep their word, they have integrity, and these beliefs, then, are what allow you to trust.

It's the same thing in the negative. If you are scared... I can't just say to you – don't be scared. And expect fear to just vanish from you. You are scared because of something you believe, or something you don't know. But if I give you new beliefs, like 'you are not alone in this room,' or 'I checked in all the closets and there are no monsters', see, then you can dissipate your fear because of these new found beliefs.

God is telling, or reminding Joshua to be strong and courageous. But how can Joshua do that? How can *you* do that? That is what I set my mind to figure out. And you just helped me do it.

Add up all those beliefs we've talked about. It is my professional opinion that Joshua, or you, or anyone really, will have no problem being strong and courageous in any circumstance, if they believe the following:

I can be strong and courageous because the all powerful God of life is not only on my side, but will never leave my side.

If this God is capable of anything, if he is all powerful and mighty, and if he is for you, and will never leave your side, what then, do you have to fear? You can be strong and courageous because the all powerful God of life is not only on your side, but will never leave your side.