

# God's Promise of Victory

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Joshua 1.1 – 9

In what seems like a lifetime ago, I worked as an engineer for Amoco Canada, an oil company which has since been acquired by BP. I think the most well-liked person in the company was Tony Niedermeyer. Tony joined Amoco as a young aspiring engineer. It's not uncommon for engineers who often have very lofty goals and expectations to not be highly regarded by field and plant personnel in the petroleum industry, but that wasn't the case with Tony – they all liked him. Tony moved very quickly through the ranks of the company – petroleum engineer, District Engineer, Plant Superintendent of the company's largest natural gas processing plant and likely the largest in Canada at the time, District Superintendent, Production Manager, and finally VP of Production. At the time Amoco had about 2,000 employees and was the largest producer of natural gas and a leader in crude oil production in Canada.

Many who move through the ranks of a company, especially when it happens so quickly, climb over or step on some people along the way and accumulate a few enemies on their way to the top. But that wasn't the case with Tony; he only had a trail of friends and supporters. From roustabouts to mechanics, to operators in the plants or field, engineers, geologists, accountants, secretaries, clerks, everyone liked Tony. Everyone genuinely celebrated his promotions; his success seemed to be everyone's success. He was friendly, personable, competent, and genuinely interested in others, no matter their position in the company. One more tid-bit of information which will help you appreciate the setting a bit more. Amoco Canada was a wholly owned subsidiary of the petroleum giant, Standard Oil of Indiana (later Amoco). From its inception Amoco Canada always had an American president and most viewed Tony as the heir apparent to becoming the first Canadian president.

You already sense there is a “*but*” to this story. One day with the kind of shock and sadness that accompanies the news of a major highway accident or an airplane crash, was the news that Tony had a brain tumor. At the time I was an engineer in the company's head office in Calgary and I remember well the sense of shock, grief and sorrow that instantly descended on the company. Several months later Tony was dead and not only did the employees of Amoco mourn, but so did many in the Alberta petroleum community. Who could replace him? Not only was there not another Tony Niedermeyer, but there wasn't even a close 2<sup>nd</sup>.

That gives me a sense of the scene some 3,400 years earlier when a similar crisis occurred and did so at what seemed to be the most inopportune time. The children of Israel were ready to cross over into the Promised Land, but before doing so, Moses died. Following is the Biblical account:

**Deuteronomy 34:5–8 (ESV)** 5 So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD, 6 and he buried him in the valley in the land of Moab opposite Beth-peor; but no one knows the place of his burial to this day. 7 Moses was 120 years old when he died. His eye was undimmed, and his vigor unabated. 8 And the people of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days. Then the days of weeping and mourning for Moses were ended.

Today we will begin a series on the ***Book of Joshua***. The preceding series, **Key Events in Our History**, provides the backdrop to the events detailed in the Book of Joshua. The Book of Joshua is filled with examples of the glory of God and His blessing on His people.

## The Setting

In my previous message, *The Catastrophe of Unbelief*,

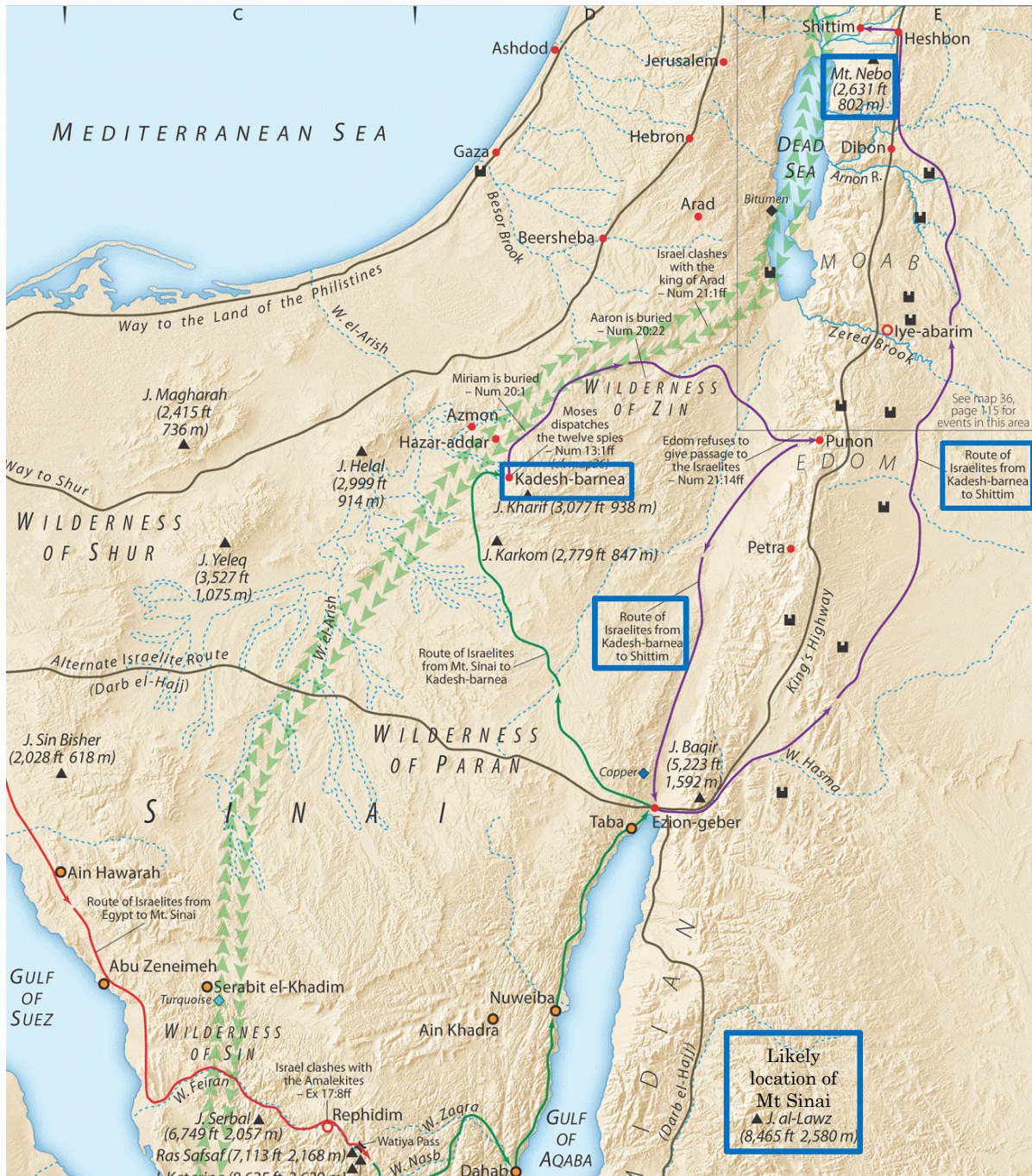
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I addressed Israel's first attempt to enter the Promised Land. God had led them to *Kadesh-Barnea* from where they explored the land. Unfortunately, controlled by fear and unbelief rather than a vision of what God could do, the people rebelled. Due to their rebellion all men 20 years old or older died in the wilderness during the following 38 years (Deu 1.3; 2.14). They likely spent most of that time near *Kadesh-Barnea*. Both Miriam and Aaron died as the 40 years came to an end and God once again directed their path to the Promised Land. This time God took them along a different route. Instead of entering directly from *Kadesh-Barnea* in the south of Canaan, God first led them east and then southward to the Red Sea (Gulf of Aqaba). Using the information in the Bible and attempts at locating the places referred to, a possible route is shown in purple on the following map. From the Red Sea, God led them northward on the east side of the Dead Sea as indicated on the map. That intentional choice would lead to an interesting obstacle reminiscent of the Red Sea crossing. As they made their way to the Plains of Moab near the north end of the Dead Sea they faced some challenges from the people living in the region.

The Promised Land was in reach once again and Moses pleaded with God to allow him to enter it, but because of his disobedience to God's command at Meribah where he struck the rock with his staff, God would not let him enter the Promised Land (Num 20.2-13; Deu 3.23-29; 34.1-8). Forty years had passed since God directed Moses to leave Midian and return to Egypt to deliver God's people from the grip and grasp of Egypt. Those years were filled with displays of the might and majesty of God as He triumphed over pharaoh and his army. God continued to supernaturally provide for His people, who too many times, displayed hearts of unbelief, despite all that God had done. In some inexplicable manner they failed to grasp the grandeur of God.

Moses' death was not unexpected, but the weight of it was surely felt by Joshua who was appointed by God to lead the people into Canaan. Before his death, God gave Moses a panoramic view of the Promised Land from the heights of Mt. Nebo (shown on the map) where he died and God buried him (Deu 34.1-6).





*Route of the Exodus, Map 34, Moody Atlas of the Bible*

## God's Promise of His Abiding Presence

Following the death of Moses, God appointed Joshua to lead His people.

**Joshua 1:1–4 (ESV)** 1 After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, 2 "Moses my servant is dead. Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel. 3 Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses. 4 From the wilderness

and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun shall be your territory.

Joshua was surely overwhelmed with the task ahead. Some 40 years earlier he had accompanied Moses as they made their way down the *Mountain of God* with the tablets engraved with the 10 Commandments only to discover the people had already forgotten God, and Moses, and were worshipping a golden calf (Exo 32). It was also Joshua and Caleb who had tried to dissuade the children of Israel from rebelling at Kadesh-Barnea, but to no avail. Joshua was well aware of recurring rebellion among the people. And now he was commissioned with the formidable task of leading this people into the Promised Land where they would immediately encounter opposition from those who dwelt there. Hence, any reservation and reluctance by Joshua was understandable.

God outlined to Joshua the extent of the Promised Land and made it clear to Joshua He would give the land to Joshua and His people. Not only though did God reiterate His promise to give the land, a promise that had been repeated innumerable times since first declared to Abraham, but God added the promise of His abiding presence. He would be there every step of the way.

## **1. Be Strong and Courageous**

Consider God's words of assurance to Joshua, "No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you." (Joshua 1:5 ESV). He added, "Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them." (Joshua 1:6 ESV). In short succession God twice repeated the phrase, "*Be strong and courageous*" (vs. 7 & 9). The repetition makes it clear this was not only important, but very, very important. In other words, this was something for Joshua to always keep it in the forefront of his mind!

God didn't give Joshua a pep-talk expecting Joshua to draw upon his own resourcefulness to muster up a *strong and courageous* attitude. God wasn't expecting Joshua to manufacture a *strong and courageous* mindset as a football coach might exhort his players before a game where they were facing a formidable opponent. Rather, God directed Joshua, instead of focusing on his strengths and abilities, or lack thereof, to turn his eyes heavenward and focus on God. Victory would be a direct result of God being with Joshua, something emphasized with God's statement, "*I will never leave you nor forsake you.*" A strong and courageous attitude would be a derivative of Joshua's trust in the abiding presence of the Lord. Realize, this was far more than having a positive mindset where Joshua constantly reminded himself, "*I can do this.*" Victory would not be achieved by virtue of Joshua's resourcefulness or resolve, but by the abiding presence of God. Not just when things went smoothly, but also when difficulties would arise, which they did! Then too, God would be alongside.

Consider times when you faced great challenges, perhaps tough decisions, or the difficulty standing steadfast in the face of adversity or disappointment. Or it may be

anticipation of adversity down the road. It is important to realize these words of Scripture aren't limited in their application to Joshua. Some 500 years later, David quoted these words from Joshua 1.9 to encourage his son Solomon as David's life was coming to an end (1 Chronicles 28.20). Thereafter, in his benediction at the dedication of the Temple, Solomon applied the same words to the people of Israel (1 Kings 8.57). Lest there be any doubt about the applicability of the words, "*I will never leave you nor forsake you*," to all believers, they are repeated in Hebrews 13.5. Erwin Lutzer, former senior pastor of *Moody Church* in Chicago, pointed out in a message about a year ago that the words are far more emphatic in Greek than they appear in English. There are successive negatives in Greek, thus, "*I will never, never leave and I will never, never forsake*." God wants us to realize that the possibility of Him abandoning His children is beyond belief; it will never happen!

Most people when facing adversity or receiving negative news appreciate someone nearby. It may be as a patient who is headed to surgery, they are comforted by the presence of a loved one. Or when recovering from surgery or struggling with a serious illness, the presence of a loved one makes all the difference. When people go to see their doctor expecting the worst of news, they are so appreciative if a friend or family member goes with them. I think of a dear saint whose mind had slipped away and was confined to a personal care home where she became so distraught. But when her husband, whom she seldom recognized anymore, sat by her bedside day after day, and month after month until she died, she was so much more content. Those examples highlight the tragedy of countless people dying alone during COVID isolation. The comfort we experience when a friend or loved one comes alongside us is illustrative of the importance of God's abiding presence to His followers. He is with His followers in the most difficult of times as well as the best of times. And in His case, His presence is synonymous with His help and sustaining strength.

## **2. Do Not Be Frightened Nor Dismayed**

God first focused on the positive, "*Be strong and courageous*," and then on the flipside. In verse 9 God added, "*Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go*." When people face hardship and difficulty, or when they anticipate it, they often become fearful and discouraged. That is precisely how Satan and his demonic realm want believers to react. They want people to be paralyzed with fear and overwhelmed with discouragement. That is what happened with the children of Israel in their rebellion against God at Kadesh-Barnea. On the other hand, God's desire is that His children will recognize He is alongside of them and they have no need to be fearful. The admonition to *not be frightened or dismayed* reappears with regularity throughout the Bible. One of the most well-known is "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil," (Ps 23.4). Or another, "Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea," (Psalm 46:2 ESV). Consider too, Isaiah 41.10, "Fear not, for I am with you; not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." (ESV). The New Testament gives us the same counsel, "Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows." (Matthew 10:31 ESV). Or



Philippians 4:6 (ESV), “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” There is only one successful way to address fear and discouragement and that is to look at the issues that trouble us from a heavenly vantage point and to do so strengthened by the grace and presence of God. It is only as we consider things from God’s perspective and draw upon His strength that we will be victorious in difficulty and adversity. Victory is not derived from our ingenuity and resourcefulness in solving problems by from God who is at our side.

## **God’s Warning to Stay Focused**

God made it clear when He commissioned Joshua that He would be with him and would give him victory when they entered the Promised Land. God’s promise also envisioned His care for and blessing of the people of God in the years ahead. Israel was God’s special people, “For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.” (Deuteronomy 7:6 ESV). Read through Deuteronomy 7 for a list of the all-encompassing benefits that God extended to Israel because of His love for them. It is clear they would be prosperous and blessed in every facet of their lives. However, the continued realization of those blessings was contingent on their ongoing focus on the Lord, something the Lord also made very clear to Joshua. They needed to remain faithful!

**Joshua 1:7–8 (ESV)** 7 Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go. 8 This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

In order for their prosperity to continue, Israel needed to remain focused on the Lord and pay heed to His Law which He gave them at Mt. Sinai. Note the importance they were to give to the Law of God. This was to be more than a pledge they made and then lived as they felt best. Rather, it needed to be given central importance because their success in the future was dependent on their adherence to what God said. It is therefore no surprise that God admonished them to meditate on His Word. Its content was to be a regular part of their conversation and daily routine. Making God’s will and His direction God-honoring living was central to their future prosperity and success. It is clear that God’s will for how they should live and the place God was given in their lives was to be front and center.

Their focus on the Lord and allegiance to Him was so significant that it would directly impact the abundance of this new land. This land was very different from what they had experienced in Egypt where they lived in Goshen on the Nile Delta and water was plentiful and readily available for irrigation.

**Deuteronomy 11:10–17 (ESV)** 10 For the land that you are entering to take possession of it is not like the land of Egypt, from which you have come, where you

sowed your seed and irrigated it, like a garden of vegetables. 11 But the land that you are going over to possess is a land of hills and valleys, which drinks water by the rain from heaven, 12 a land that the LORD your God cares for. The eyes of the LORD your God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year. 13 “And if you will indeed obey my commandments that I command you today, to love the LORD your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul, 14 he will give the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the later rain, that you may gather in your grain and your wine and your oil. 15 And he will give grass in your fields for your livestock, and you shall eat and be full. 16 Take care lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them; 17 then the anger of the LORD will be kindled against you, and he will shut up the heavens, so that there will be no rain, and the land will yield no fruit, and you will perish quickly off the good land that the LORD is giving you.

In this land, as they remained faithful to the Lord and walked with Him, He would provide rain as needed and He would care for their crops. However, if they disregarded God and turned to false gods, God would be angered and would hold back the rain and the land would wither and become barren. Continued blessing was contingent on God being their central focus. Throughout the pages of Scripture it is apparent God is intolerant of those who turn aside from Him and choose to serve false gods. The central and distinguishing characteristic between Israel’s kings who were commended by God in contrast to those who weren’t, is whether they served the true God or turned aside to false gods. God tolerated many missteps, but never the worship of false gods which ultimately led to their demise and captivity in Assyria and Babylon.

The worship of God and obedience to Him is a critical and indispensable choice by the people of God, whether in the Old or New Testament. Today few, at least in our part of the world, set up idols of wood, stone, or metal, or Asherah poles on the high places and worship them. However, many follow religions fashioned by men and offered as a substitute for Biblical Christianity. Others dispense with any religious pretense all together and push God aside and put themselves in His place. They unabashedly adopt the ultimate form of idolatry – self-worship, the total rejection of God. They adopt the example of people from antiquity who, “*did that which was right in their own eyes*” (Judges 17.6; 21.25). Rather than accept God’s delineation of truth, they rely on their own judgement. That ultimate expression of idolatry characterizes countless millions of people across our planet who follow their own self-styled belief system rather than what God has said.

There is a great deal of talk these days about climate change. There appears to be indisputable evidence that the climate has in fact changed over the past decades. However, while the world of science is convinced the cause of climate change is greenhouse gases and carbon emissions, the issue may be much more fundamental. Given what we learn about God’s dealings with Israel, the real cause is much more likely rebellion against the God who created the heavens and earth. Perhaps as people have turned away from Him, He responds to their unbelief by withdrawing

His hand of blessing and increasingly giving greater liberty to satan and his demonic realm. Our world desperately needs to turn back to the true God!

The warning God gave to Joshua and successive generations, including our own, is the critical and non-negotiable importance of serving and worshipping the one and only true God. The person who walks with God has every reason to *be strong and courageous* and have confidence that God is alongside of them. They have every reason to anticipate God's sustaining strength when journeying through paths of adversity and trial. However, the person who has pushed God aside and believes they don't need Him, has no more reason to expect blessing from God anymore than Israel did if they turned and served other gods.

## God's Provision for Failure

Fortunately, all is not lost, at least not yet, for those who have made missteps along the way and have pushed God to the sidelines of their lives. Israel was guilty of rebellion against God on innumerable occasions. We have considered some of them in their journey from Egypt to the Plains of Moab where they waited to cross into the Promised Land. Their most grievous sin would be total abandonment of God and serving false gods. However, God had envisioned the possibility of their future rebellion and held out a promise to them if that ever happened.

Consider the invitation God extended to His people in

**Deuteronomy 30:1–3** (ESV) 30 “And when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God has driven you, 2 and return to the LORD your God, you and your children, and obey his voice in all that I command you today, with all your heart and with all your soul, 3 then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have mercy on you, and he will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you.

If the people called by His Name repented of their sins and turned back to Him, they could expect forgiveness and restoration. “For the LORD will again take delight in prospering you, as he took delight in your fathers, when you obey the voice of the LORD your God, to keep his commandments and his statutes that are written in this Book of the Law, when you turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. (Deuteronomy 30:9b–10 ESV).

The pattern described in Deuteronomy 30 and elsewhere in the Bible is mirrored in the *Parable of the Prodigal Son* found in Luke 15.11 – 32 where the wayward son is welcomed home. This side of physical death, the Lord continues to invite people to turn from their sin and place their faith and trust in Jesus Christ for their salvation and walk with Him.



## Conclusion

God's promise to Joshua was the certainty of victory. That victory would be realized because God was with Joshua; He would be alongside of him every step of the way. Therefore, Joshua had every reason to be strong and courageous and to not fear or be dismayed.

If you are struggling today, look up, and lay hold of the outstretched hand of God. Draw upon God's offer of grace and strength as He walks alongside of you. God promises to strengthen His children with His power through His Spirit in the very depth of their being.

On the other hand, if anyone reading this doesn't know the Lord, repent of your sin and accept Jesus Christ's invitation to believe the Gospel and trust in Him and His death on the cross of Calvary for your sin. Accept the forgiveness of your sins which He offers to you and choose today to turn aside from your self-directed life and choose to walk with the Lord. All your problems will certainly not go away, but you can be certain that as you face them it will be with the Lord's insight and care. Those who believe the Gospel of salvation and trust in the Lord are filled with His Spirit and are made alive in Christ.

Resolve today that you will walk with the Lord and will seek to honor Him in dependence on Him.

*God Will Take Care of You* sung by the SE Samonte choir

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ijytLs96yig&ab\\_channel=SESamonte](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ijytLs96yig&ab_channel=SESamonte)