

OLD TESTAMENT GOSPEL DOCTRINE CLASS

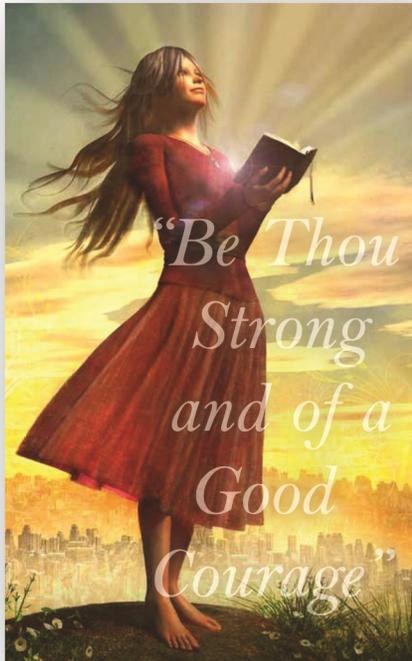
Green Mountain 1st Ward, Lakewood, Colorado

16 May 2010

Page 1

Lesson 18: "Be Strong and of a Good Courage" (Joshua 1–6; 23–24)

Introduction



This lesson is about Joshua, the prophet who led the children of Israel in their conquest of the promised land. When calling Joshua to be a prophet and succeed Moses, the Lord counseled him to "be strong and of a good courage" (Joshua 1:6) and commanded him to study the scriptures and keep the commandments. Joshua became strong as he allowed God to shape his character. Similarly, as we allow God to shape our character, we can become strong in living the gospel of Jesus Christ and accomplish the things the Lord wants us to do.

Background: During the Israelites' 40-year sojourn in the wilderness, Moses had given them God's law, acted as God's spokesman, and served as their guide. He was the only leader an entire generation of Israelites had known. But the Lord took him at the end of their sojourn—just when they faced a great test. Remembering his promises to Israel, the Lord raised up a new leader, Joshua, who ably directed the conquest and settlement of the promised land.

Lesson Highlights

- The Lord calls Joshua.
- The Israelites cross the Jordan River on dry ground, through their faith, Jericho is destroyed.
- Joshua and his people covenant to serve the Lord.

The Lord calls Joshua. (Joshua 1)

Joshua faced many challenges when the Lord called him to succeed Moses in leading the Israelites. He had to lead Israel in the conquest and settlement of Canaan, which was a mighty undertaking. He was also taking the place of a great leader.

Joshua 1:5 - The Lord gave Joshua assurances as Joshua prepared to enter the promised land.

The Lord's assurance, often given in priesthood blessings as a person is set apart for a new calling, helps us in a new callings or one which presents particular challenges for us.

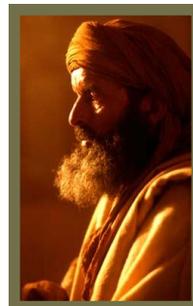
Joshua 1:6-9 - The Lord's command to be strong and of a good courage was repeated three times.

Joshua 1:7 - The Lord said Joshua would need courage and strength to "do according to all the law". Although Joshua would need courage to fight many military battles, he would also need moral courage—the courage to do what is right to observe all the law.

We also face challenges today that require strength and moral courage, so we need to learn from Joshua's example.

Joshua 1:8 - The Lord told Joshua to meditate on the "book of the law"(scriptures) to "have good success".

Scripture study was important for Joshua to succeed in his calling. Consider how regular scripture study helps us meet our challenges.



A study of this lesson will encourage us to be strong and courageous in living the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Next Week

May 23: STAKE CONFERENCE

May 30: #19 The Reign of the Judges (Judges 2; 4; 6–7; 13–16)

• **The Israelites cross the Jordan River on dry ground; through their faith, Jericho is destroyed. (Joshua 3–4 and 6)**

Joshua 3:7-8, 14-17; 4:14 - When the Israelites needed to cross the Jordan River, its banks were overflowing. The Lord showed the children of Israel that he was with Joshua just as he had been with Moses by allowing them to cross over on dry ground.



Jordan River, Israel



The Ark of the Covenant was a portable altar that contained sacred writings, including Moses' writings and the tablets containing the Ten Commandments.

Just as he demonstrated for Israel that Joshua was his authorized servant and prophet, the Lord shows us that he directs and inspires the living prophet just as he did past prophets.

Joshua 3:13-17 (14-17 cited above) - The priests who carried the ark had to step into the water before the waters of the Jordan River were stopped.

The Lord sometimes asks similar things of us. He often requires a demonstration of faith and then blesses us for our faith in him and his word

only after we take those first steps of obedience. This principle is the subject of this story from **Elder Boyd K.**

Packer: *"Shortly after I was called as a General Authority, I went to Elder Harold B. Lee for counsel. He listened very carefully to my problem and suggested that I see President David O. McKay. President McKay counseled me as to the direction I should go. I was very willing to be obedient but saw no way possible for me to do as he counseled me to do. I returned to Elder Lee and told him that I saw no way to move in the direction I was counseled to go. He said, 'The trouble with you is you want to see the end from the beginning.' I replied that I would like to see at least a step or two ahead. Then came the lesson of a lifetime: 'You must learn to walk to the edge of the light, and then a few steps into the darkness; then the light will appear and show the way before you' "* (BYU Today, Mar. 1991, 22-23).

Joshua 4:1-9 - The Israelites were told to set up a memorial of 12 stones after crossing the Jordan River. It was to be a testimony of the Lord's power to future generations, reminding them that the Lord would bless them

just as he had their fathers. Consider what personal memorials remind you of God's power in your life. What about the sacrament; pictures of Christ, temples, and prophets; the scriptures; and spiritual experiences recorded in journals?

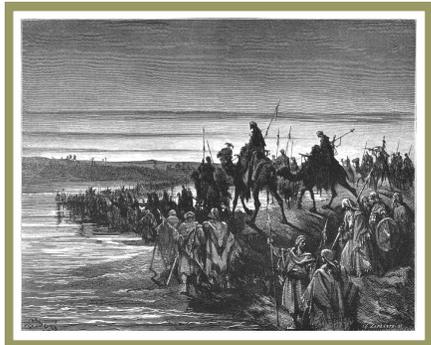
Joshua 4:21-24 - These memorials bless the lives of others as they learn to appreciate the Lord's power.

The Lord answers prayers, gives blessings, gives revelation, and performs wonderful works for each new generation; so many such memorials have been established.

Joshua 6 describes the fall of Jericho.

Hebrews 11:30 - The walls of Jericho fell because of faith. The Israelites' behavior was an act of faith because they had no reason to know that their marching and trumpeting would bring down the walls, so they acted on faith that the Lord would fulfill his promise.

Joshua 6:17, 22-25; 2:1-15 - The only inhabitants of Jericho who were saved were Rahab and her family because she hid the messengers who had been sent as spies.

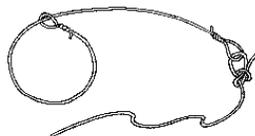


The Children of Israel Crossing Jordan
Gustave Dore

**"And the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan."
—Joshua 3:17**

Joshua and his people covenant to serve the Lord. (Joshua 23; 24:14–31)

Toward the end of his life, Joshua reminded the Israelites what God had done for them. Joshua also counseled them about avoiding traps and snares.



There are simple things we can do to avoid being caught in a trap—first, recognize that it is a trap and then, stay away from it!

Joshua 23:8; 23:12 - In his final counsel, Joshua exhorted Israel to "cleave unto the Lord" rather than "cleave unto the remnant of [the Canaanite] nations". Note that in this instance, the word cleavemeans to glue or join together.

Each day we choose—consciously or unconsciously—to either "cleave unto the Lord" or to cleave unto the world. Cleaving to the Canaanite nations would be a snare and a trap to the Israelites. Consider some of the snares and traps of the world that we face today.

Joshua 24:14-15 - Joshua's important counsel on choice was given near the end of his life.

Joshua 24:15-18, 21-25, 31 - Joshua and Israel covenanted to serve God.

The following counsel from a latter-day apostle reminds us that a person cannot serve the true God and worldly gods at the same time; that it is important to choose today to serve the Lord...

Elder Marvin J. Ashton said: “Joshua reminds us of the importance of making decisions promptly: ‘Choose you this day whom ye will serve; ... but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord’ (Joshua 24:15) Not tomorrow, not when we get ready, not when it is conven-

ient—but ‘this day,’ straightway, choose whom you will serve. He who invites us to follow will always be out in front of us with His Spirit and influence setting the pace. He has charted and marked the course, opened the gates, and shown the way. He has invited us to come unto Him, and the

best time to enjoy His companionship is straightway. We can best get on the course and stay on the course by doing as Jesus did—make a total commitment to do the will of His Father”

(Ensign, May 1983, 30-31).

Conclusion

Joshua’s final counsel to the Israelites included the same charge that the Lord had given when calling him to be a prophet—to be strong and to have courage (Joshua 23:1–6). The charge applies as much today as it did then because we are all engaged in the important spiritual battle between good and evil.

Elder Ezra Taft Benson said that two principles are essential for security and peace: “*First, trust in God; and second, a determination to keep the commandments, to serve the Lord, to do that which is right. ... The Lord has made it very clear in the revelations that even though times become perilous, even though we be surrounded by temptation and sin, even though there be a feeling of insecurity, even though men’s hearts may fail them and anxiety fill their souls, if we only trust in God and keep his commandments we need have no fear*” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1950, 146).

Additional Teaching

Caleb receives the land of Hebron

Joshua 14 recounts how Caleb received the land of Hebron from Joshua because he had “wholly followed the Lord”.

President Spencer W. Kimball stated his admiration for Caleb and suggested some lessons we can learn from him: “*From Caleb’s example we learn very important lessons. Just as Caleb had to*

struggle and remain true and faithful to gain his inheritance, so we must remember that, while the Lord has promised us a place in his kingdom, we must ever strive constantly and faithfully so as to be worthy to receive the reward...

“Caleb concluded his moving declaration with a request and a challenge with which my heart finds full sympathy. The Anakims, the giants, were still inhabiting the promised land, and they had to be overcome.

Said Caleb, now at 85 years, ‘Give me this mountain’ (Joshua 14:12). “This is my feeling for the work at this moment. There are great challenges ahead of us, giant opportunities to be met. I welcome that exciting prospect and feel to say to the Lord, humbly, ‘Give me this mountain,’ give me these challenges” (Ensign, Nov. 1979, 79).

“And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”
—Joshua 24:15

Gospel Doctrine Notebook

Record your thoughts on the teachings discussed in this lesson.

- How has the assurance that the Lord will not fail you, nor forsake you helped you in new callings or challenges?
- What examples of moral courage have you observed?