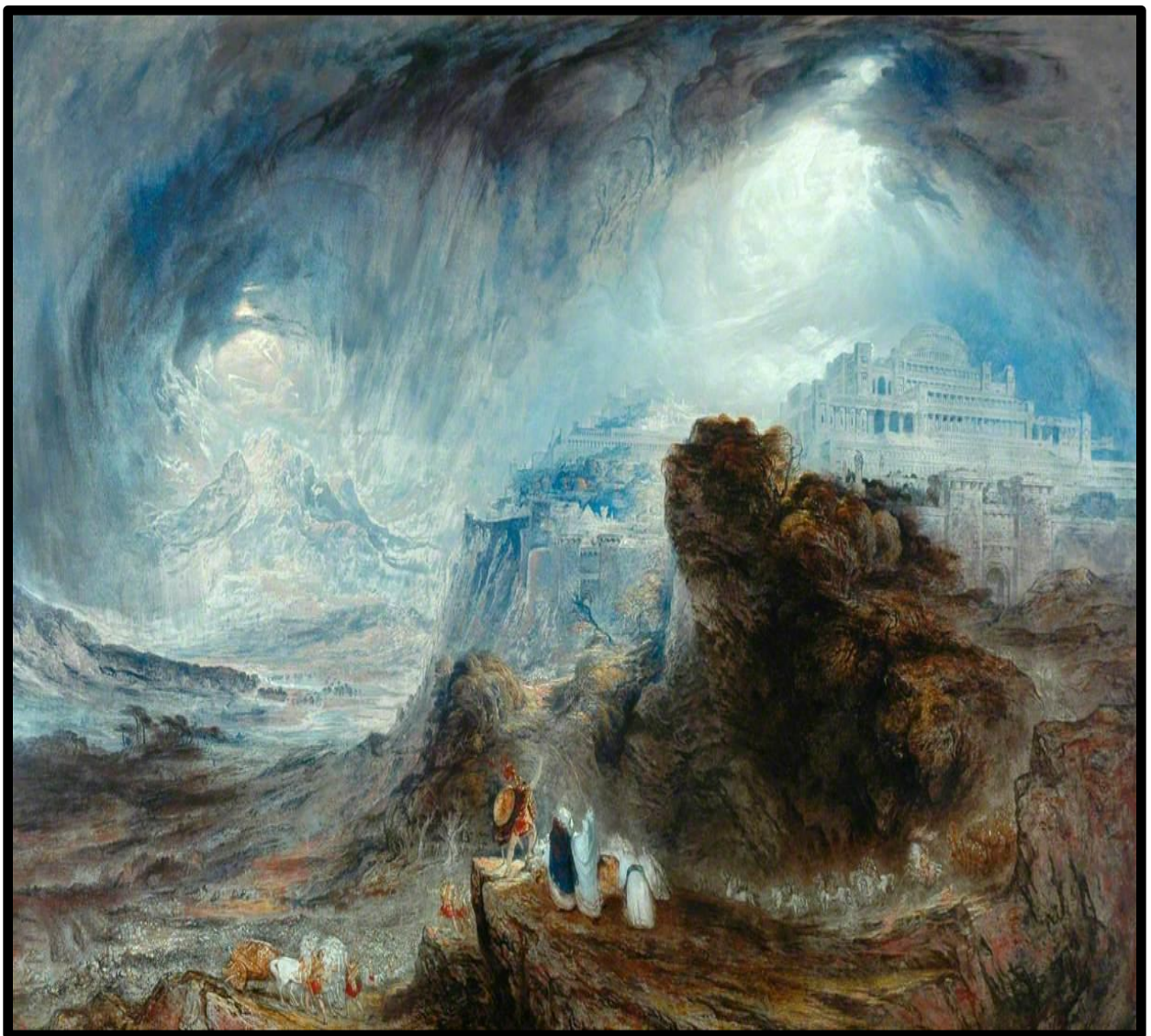


LIVING GODS WILL

Vessel of God

JOSHUA



Joshua Commanding the Sun to Stand Still by John Martin

Born: 1485 BC, Goshen, Egypt

Died: 1375 BC, Ephraim, Canaan (at age 110)

Joshua was one of the **twelve spies of Canaan**.

Joshua replaced **Moses** after he died.

Joshua was chosen by God to **lead Israel** into the Promised Land.

Joshua is the **greatest military leader** in human history.

Joshua is best known as **Moses'** second in command who takes over and leads the Israelites into the Promised Land after Moses' death. **Joshua** is considered one of the Bible's greatest military leaders for leading the seven-year conquest of the Promised Land, and is often held up as a model for leadership and a source of practical application on how to be an effective leader. Let's look at his life from a biblical perspective.

As a military leader, **Joshua** would be considered one of the greatest generals in human history, but it would be a mistake to credit Israel's victory solely to **Joshua's** skill as a military general. The first time we see **Joshua** is in **Exodus 17** in the battle against the Amalekites.

Exodus 17:13 tells us that **Joshua** "overwhelmed Amalek and his people," and so we're tempted to conclude that **Joshua's** military expertise saved the day. But in this passage, we see something odd occurring. In **verse 11** we read, "**Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed, and whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed.**"

Eventually, Moses' arms grew so weary that a stone had to be brought for him to sit on and Aaron and Hur held his hands up. Hence, we see in this vignette that **Joshua** prevailed because **God** gave him the battle.

The same can be said of the military victories in the Promised Land. The **Lord** had promised sure victory and delivered it in convincing fashion. The only exception is in the battle of Ai (**Joshua 7**). There are several things to note about this incident. Israel broke faith with **God** regarding the "devoted things" (**Joshua 7:1**).

God had commanded the Israelites to devote everything to destruction (**Joshua 6:17**), and Achan had kept some of the loot from the battle of Jericho for himself. Because of this, **God** judged them by not giving them the victory at Ai. Another thing to note is that there is no explicit command by **God** to go against Ai.

The purpose of putting these two battle stories side by side is to show that when God sets the program and agenda, victory follows, but when man sets the program and agenda, failure ensues.

Jericho was the **Lord's** battle; Ai was not. **God** redeemed the situation and eventually gave them the victory, but not until after the object lesson was given.

Further evidence of **Joshua's** leadership qualities can be seen in his rock-solid faith in **God**. When the Israelites were on the edge of the Promised Land in **Numbers 13**, **God** commanded Moses to send out twelve people to spy out the land, one from each of the tribes of Israel.

Upon their return, ten reported that the land, while bounteous as the **Lord** had promised, was occupied by strong and fierce warriors dwelling in large, fortified cities. Furthermore, the **Nephilim** (giants from the Israelites' perspective) were in the land.

Joshua and **Caleb** were the only two who urged the people to take the land (**Numbers 14:6-10**). Here we see one thing that sets **Joshua (and Caleb)** apart from the rest of the Israelites—they believed in the promises of **God**. They were not intimidated by the size of the warriors or the strength of the cities.

Rather, they knew their **God** and remembered how He had dealt with Egypt, the most powerful nation on the earth at that time. If **God** could take care of the mighty Egyptian army, He could certainly take care of the various Canaanite tribes.

God rewarded **Joshua's** and **Caleb's** faith by exempting them from the entire generation of Israelites that would perish in the wilderness.

Joshua and Caleb are two Israelite men whose stories offer an example of faithful commitment to the **Lord**. Both men came out of Egypt with the Israelites through the Red Sea and into the wilderness.

Joshua and Caleb were selected along with ten other men to explore the Promised Land and give a report to Moses and the people. After a 40-day exploration of Canaan, the explorers reported,

"We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! Here is its fruit. But the people who live there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large. We even saw descendants of Anak there" (**Numbers 13:27-28**).

This report frightened the people (**Numbers 13:31-33**). Caleb had a different attitude from the other spies. **Verse 30** records,

"Then Caleb silenced the people before Moses and said, 'We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it.'"

When the people complained that they could not go up to conquer the land, both Caleb and **Joshua** responded strongly:

“Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh . . . tore their clothes and said to the entire Israelite assembly, ‘The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good. If the Lord is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us. Only do not rebel against the Lord.

And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will devour them. Their protection is gone, but the Lord is with us. Do not be afraid of them” (Numbers 14:6–9).

God judged the people of Israel by making them wait 40 years to enter the land. He also promised that every person 20 years old or older would die in the wilderness and would not see the land with two exceptions—Caleb and **Joshua**. Why?

“Because my servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly, I will bring him into the land he went to, and his descendants will inherit it” (Numbers 14:24; see also verse 30).

Verse 38 adds, **“Not one of you will enter the land I swore with uplifted hand to make your home, except Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun.”**

This promise came true. After the death of Moses 40 years later, **Joshua** led the people across the Jordan River into the Promised Land. Caleb received an inheritance in the Promised Land in his old age (**Joshua 14**).

The faithfulness of **Joshua** and Caleb teaches us that we are to stand for **God** even when others will not. When we do, **God** may choose to bless us in ways that will extend for generations to come.

We see **Joshua’s** faithfulness in the act of obediently consecrating the people before the invasion of the Promised Land and again after the defeat at Ai. But no more clearly is **Joshua’s** faithfulness on display than at the end of the book that bears his name when he gathers the people together one last time and recounts the deeds of **God** on their behalf. After that speech, **Joshua** urges the people to forsake their idols and remain faithful to the covenant that **God** made with them at Sinai, saying,

“And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (**Joshua 24:15**).

So what can we learn from **Joshua’s** life? Can we draw principles for leadership from his life? Sure. That **God** gave him the victory in taking the Promised Land does not take away from his military leadership.

Furthermore, he was a more-than-capable leader for the Israelites, but his skill in leadership is not the primary lesson we should draw from **Joshua’s** life.

A better lesson would be **Joshua's** faithfulness, his stand against the ten spies who brought the disparaging report about the obstacles in taking over the Promised Land, and his zeal in ensuring the covenant faithfulness of the people.

But even his faith wasn't perfect. There is the fact that **Joshua** sent spies into Jericho even though **God** had ensured victory, and then there is the overconfidence he exhibited in the battle of Ai.

The primary lesson to draw from **Joshua's** life is that **God** is faithful to His promises. **God** promised Abraham that his descendants would dwell in the land, and, under **Joshua**, **God** brought the people into the land that He had promised to give to them. This act completed the mission of redemption that **God** started with Moses in bringing Israel out of Egypt.

It is also a type that points to the ultimate redemption that **Jesus** brings to the community of faith. Like Moses, **Jesus** delivered us from bondage and slavery to sin, and, like **Joshua**, **Jesus** will bring us into the eternal Promised Land and everlasting Sabbath rest (**Hebrews 4:8-10**).

SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE

Numbers 14:6 But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes; and they spoke to all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying: "The land we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land. If the Lord delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us, 'a land which flows with milk and honey.' Only do not rebel against the Lord, nor fear the people of the land, for they are our bread; their protection has departed from them, and the Lord is with us. Do not fear them."

Numbers 14:38 But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh remained alive, of the men who went to spy out the land.

Joshua 1:1 After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, it came to pass that the Lord spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, saying: "Moses My servant is dead. Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them--the children of Israel.

Joshua 18:3 Then Joshua said to the children of Israel: "How long will you neglect to go and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers has given you?"

Joshua 3:5 And Joshua said to the people, "Sanctify yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you." Then Joshua spoke to the priests, saying, "Take up the ark of the covenant and cross over before the people." So, they took up the ark of the covenant and went before the people. And the Lord said to Joshua, "This day I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with you.



**Joshua Crossing the Jordan with the Ark
by Benjamin West**