

Sketch of Joshua

by John Nelson Darby

John Nelson Darby's sermon 'Sketch of Joshua' explores the journey of faith from Egypt to Canaan, emphasizing obedience, God's promises, and the believer's spiritual battles.

Topics: "Faith and Obedience", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

John Nelson Darby presents a profound exploration of the journey from Egypt to Canaan, emphasizing that believers, through faith, are already positioned in heavenly places despite their earthly struggles. He illustrates how the Red Sea signifies deliverance from sin, while the wilderness represents the Christian life of trials, with Christ as the sustenance. The sermon highlights the importance of obedience to God's word and the necessity of His presence for victory over spiritual adversaries. Darby draws parallels between the experiences of Israel and the believer's life, underscoring the need for self-judgment and reliance on the Holy Spirit. Ultimately, he encourages Christians to recognize their identity in Christ and the power of His resurrection as they navigate their spiritual journey.

Transcript

The Red Sea closes Egypt; but by faith I am already in Canaan, not in Egypt at all, having been brought out. I am not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in me. I have died out of flesh. The world is not Egypt to me now, but a place of exercise as the wilderness. Moses pleads for God's going with Israel the reason given for His destroying them. How could we get on through the world if God did not go with us?

It had been all grace up to Sinai; after it came the law. The world was Egypt, but is now a wilderness; but the Book of Joshua shews the other side of Canaan, the type of heavenly places. Numbers opens out the journey through the wilderness.

The world through which I am passing is the desert to me, with Christ as my manna, and the rock whence water flows; and I am passing through as a pilgrim and a stranger. Our enemies, Satan and all, have been destroyed for faith. The Christian is always in that sense a riddle. He has Christ as his life, but not wholly yet as Saviour (Phil. 3:20); he has, and he has not, salvation; he is waiting for redemption, not as regards the forgiveness of sins (Eph. 1:7), but as to the body (Rom. 8:23). So in his service all is enigmatic to unbelief; "by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well-known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing all things," 2 Cor. 6.

By faith, and in the Spirit, I have this place in Christ who is in heaven; for, in point of fact, we are poor feeble creatures, who have this treasure in earthen vessels. The fulness of Christ as a man dwells in me, and Christ is my life. It is not mere theory or mysticism, but we who believe are united to Christ by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; and this is intended to promote self-judgment, neither darkness on the one hand, nor self-satisfaction on the other, but a constant judging of ourselves by Christ our Lord.

Joshua 1.

Verse 3. We have the principle: Jehovah was giving the land to the children of Israel. Now there is in it another element - it has to be realized. It is all yours, but you must realize it. It is for us enjoying the heavenly land in the Holy Ghost.

336 Verse 5. Another great element is God's presence with us. We must have the courage of faith, and count on Him.

Verse 7. But the courage of faith must be the courage to obey God's word, "that thou must prosper whithersoever thou goest."

Verse 8. Hence the word must form the path. There is the diligence requisite that takes the word, and meditates on it, to know the mind and will of God.

Verse 9. There is submission to His authority. "Have not I commanded thee? "It is a great secret of blessing, before one sets about anything, to know that God commands one. Difficulties! If I have the certainty of His will, why mind them? If He puts them in the way, one takes the step, spite of all, looking to Him. The hill and the mud may be in the road where I am to walk: if I did not know I was in the right road, they might make me think that I had gone wrong. All the principles of the christian combat follow. Obedience is the great thing here, and along with it one should be strong and of good courage.

Joshua 2.

Verses 9-11. Faith learns that, after all, the terror of God has fallen on the enemies. It should not be so with us: "In nothing terrified by your adversaries; which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God." If one finds the mighty power of Satan coming against us, why be in the least frightened? Is not the Lord stronger than he? If God is with me, who against?

Rahab is a believer in the midst of all this people; she shews us the character of faith. So James points to her faith no less than Abraham's. She was identifying herself with the people of God because she was sure that He was with them, as Abraham had given up everything to God. James takes both as proofs and samples of faith: the one counting on God; the other seeing what His people are to Him. For His sake one was willing to kill his son, the other to betray her country. They were the two strongest possible instances of practical faith - bad works, if they had not been of faith, which made them most excellent. So the motive that governed Moses was his identifying Jehovah's glory with His people; not that He is glorious merely. "The Egyptians will hear of it." The same principle that makes him execute judgment in killing the idolaters below, makes him plead their cause with Jehovah above.

337 Joshua 3.

Verse 4. The crossing of the Jordan is the grand point here. The ark was to be there, and "there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure: Come not near unto it, that ye may

know the way by which ye must go; for ye have not passed this way heretofore." It was going down into death there where Jordan had flowed. This was what the Lord says to Peter: "Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now, but thou shalt follow me afterwards." Jesus must first go into this scene of death: afterwards we can follow Him into heavenly places. There is no water at all, once the ark is there: the river fails, and the ark remains, till they are all gone over to the other side. So has Christ utterly broken the power of death, in resurrection of course finally destroyed it. The moment Christ had gone through all, there is free entrance for the believer into heaven, first in spirit, by-and-by actually. It is not now deliverance from Egypt, but coming into Canaan; in passing over Jordan, as before through the Red Sea. Death for the believer is now that he has done with life, sins, suffering, trial, temptation, the world; for he goes to be with Christ, though he waits for a glorified body, till He comes to raise them that sleep. I did belong to death; now death belongs to me. "All things are yours . . . life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." Otherwise how could one talk, for example, of judgment being mine, or righteousness, etc.? Now I can; for judgment cannot reach me, because Christ has borne my sins.

Verses 15-17. Here it is not the wilderness, but the second part of Christian life, heavenly places, into which we get by association with Christ. It is not merely His dying for us, but our dying with Him. It is all done: the Jordan, as we see, is quite dry. Scripture does not say that we have to die. We have to go over Jordan, not as a river, but as a dry path, into Canaan. We are quickened together with Christ, being forgiven all trespasses; we are raised together and seated in Him in heavenly places. The dry bed of the river shews how completely the power of death is gone.

338 In verse 13 the title of Jehovah is "Lord of all the earth," His character in connection with Israel.

Joshua 4.

A memorial of twelve stones is set up in Jordan, and as many are taken out of it and set up on dry ground in Canaan. It is the witness that through death I get into heaven, and I look back constantly at Christ's death. The ark went down into Jordan and stayed till the people crossed over. I am out of death; and yet my privilege is to look back at Christ's death in everything. This makes all the gain to us. He has turned all to the greatest blessing. I get the old man judged, and gone to faith. Is not this much for the soul? What was the judgment of God is the very ground of all blessing - first, as to Christ Himself, and then as to my being in it with Christ. As to my place, I have done with the old creation. The fact that blessing is by death, the death of the Son of God, tells a great deal that nothing else can. Till I take death as the end of everything here, of all that Adam was, what part have I with God? In the present day they are trying to reform and improve Adam by schools, societies, etc. The Christian, alas! joins with the infidel in mending up the old thing. It is casting contempt on the death of Christ; a totally different thing from my doing good as a Christian, because this is the spirit of Christ. In Israel God wrought the experiment before all eyes of doing everything possible to reclaim man, if it could be; but it could not be, as He of course knew from the beginning. Man is irremediable, but God can save one, or any, out of that state. Yet all was tried first. "I have one Son." The cross was the final moral judgment of man.

The stones were set in the midst of Jordan, because still we go back, and see the people of God in Christ's death. Jordan overflowed all its banks then; the power of death and Satan was never seen as in the cross of Christ.

Joshua 5.

Verses 1-9. Gilgal, as the scene of Israel's circumcision, is the next step; it means rolling. There they submitted to that sign of the covenant, and rolled away the reproach of Egypt. They had never been circumcised in the wilderness. One may be delivered from Egypt; but there is no such thing as being crucified to the world in merely belonging to the wilderness, though we have to go through it, and overcome it. But in getting into heavenly places, one has done with it and is circumcised.

339 Verses 10-12. Israel had not got a bit of the land yet, though they had crossed the Jordan and encamped in Gilgal, But they now keep the Passover, and eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow after, and the manna ceased. A risen Christ is needed to feed the soul (2 Cor. 5).

Verses 13-15. And now another point: the Captain of Jehovah's host appears with drawn sword, See to what they are brought by crossing the Jordan. First they are circumcised, they apply it to their condition; they are no longer in the flesh as to their own estimate or experience. Having died with Christ, I am not in the flesh, having put off the old man, and put on the new. In going now through the world I have to manifest the life of Christ. If Satan comes to tempt me, I am entitled to say that I am dead. When I get into Canaan, everything is for me or against me, Supposing I have even an amiable nature, it is a snare; in walking through this world, as, for instance, in the young rich ruler. But before God all are pronounced out of the way altogether. Affection is lovely as a creature thing; but one sees the same in a dog, save that man boasts of it, and the dog does not! There is nothing moral in that, Which is best - an amiable man pleased with himself, or a cross man crying to God to give him grace? Amiability will not do at all - you must have Christ, and you will be cross because you are denying that which you were priding yourself upon. When we get into heavenly things, the question is, "Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?"

The circumcision here is the application (so to speak) of Jordan; for until you get into heavenly places you never can judge yourself - you judge sins. If I began so, I should be hopeless, because I could not get rid of it till I am dead with Christ. This is Jordan. The flesh is never anything but thoroughly bad. I must have death with Christ before I can have circumcision, or mortifying it. Pleasures? 'I am dead' puts an end to all question of these things. The moment one gets the truth of being heavenly, one sees the inconsistency of all that. We are never in scripture called to die to sin; Christ died, and in that He died, He died unto sin once. Of course He had no sin; but for this reason God could make Him to be sin for us in grace, that we might become God's righteousness in Him. As for me, I have sin, and therefore cannot die to it; but He did; and I, being dead with Him as a believer, am called to reckon myself dead unto sin, and alive unto God in Him. So much for death first.

340 That getting into heavenly places in Christ is exactly what brings me into conflict with Satan. In the wilderness one is apt to be impatient, and exercises and dealings come from God; but, passed into Canaan in spirit, I am competent and called to fight the enemy. Circumcision means that I disown and mortify the flesh, I will have nothing to do with it and put it off. It is the practical realization of what I have in title in Christ (Col. 2:11), being a figure of having put off the old man, not that one has to put him off. Having Christ as my life, Christ dead and risen, I can say that this is not I, but sin in the flesh; but then I am bound, if it be so, that sin never acts; I am inexcusable if I allow it to appear. As it is, then, I need the circumcision or mortification of it. "Mortify, therefore, your members which are on the earth." This supposes power in Christ; for it means, not that I am to die, but to put to death. I am to act in power, to kill or put to death what is working in myself; I am to spare nothing in me that is contrary to God, but use power to put these things down. Not being called to die to sin makes it very plain. See the realization of it in the apostle (in 2 Cor. 4) - "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus," the daily making it good. I get my place in holy liberty when I can say that I died with Christ, and am crucified with

Him; but being also risen with Him, and having in Him the power of life in resurrection, I can take the place of being circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, as the condition of soul inwardly henceforth; and now I must be always carrying out the true meaning of the cross. If the flesh attempts to crop up, I can say, I do not own you, being dead and risen with Christ.

Then I eat the passover and recall the remembrance of this blessed work which did bring me out of Egypt. Christ is thenceforward eaten as the corn of the land; a heavenly Christian, I live on the fruits of Canaan, the heavenly things that God has revealed to us. The manna means Christ come down to us in this world. In heaven it will be precious to eat the hidden manna; but it is not the food for us as entering Canaan. Manna is not His heavenly side, but Christ for us down here, as we pass through the wilderness; as the old corn is Christ risen and in heavenly places.

341 So the Holy Ghost has an analogous place. He is the earnest of the inheritance (Rom. 8), shewing us all the joys of the future, and of heaven; but He helps our infirmity also and groans in us, conscious of all the trials and difficulties of the way. Both are true of course of the Christian.

It is beautiful to see the way Jehovah suits Himself to His people. When they were in Egypt, they wanted a Redeemer; and the word is, "Stand still, and see the salvation of Jehovah." When in the wilderness, they were staying awhile, or journeying; and Jehovah comes and lives in a tent in their midst, or goes at their head. In Canaan He appears as Captain of Jehovah's host with a drawn sword, because it was a question of their fighting. When they were settled in peace in the land, and He has built the king a house, He has a great palace built for Him, a temple of Jehovah.

We are not like Israel fighting against flesh and blood, but against the world-rulers of this darkness, spiritual wickedness in heavenly places. Our translators in Ephesians 6 say, "high places"; they were afraid to represent evil spirits in heavenly places as they changed thrones into "seats" in Revelation for the twenty-four elders or glorified saints. They judged scripture presumptuously, instead of learning from it in simplicity.

We have the whole position now: the principles on which we are to walk in chapter 1; the Jordan, or death and resurrection with Christ for heaven, in chapters 3, 4; the application of it in chapter 5.

Joshua 6.

Then in chapter 6 follows the warfare or conflict. The first thing shewn for conflict is the absolutely divine power that is needed and given. They are commanded to march round Jericho, ark and all; and the walls at last at the given moment - the very thing that alarmed them before - are made to tumble down without a blow; but this is only on the seventh turn on the seventh day of their compassing the city. Then it is accursed, and must be all destroyed. Self must not be mixed up with it; it is Jehovah's power, and Israel must have no connection with it, save in submissive obedience to His word, and no spoil for their own use could be taken out of it. Israel must appropriate nothing. Jehovah would have them in no way mixed up with the great city of the world devoted to destruction. Those on the contrary must be destroyed who touch its treasures. They are Satan's goods.

342 Joshua 7.

But the goods were touched, and Israel got all beaten directly after at Ai. It is simple but instructive. God acts on the sin that was there, though hidden. Israel had not consulted God but went forward on human

principles. Discipline follows.

Verse 3. "Let not all the people go up; but let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai, and make not all the people labour thither; for they are but few." Such was the counsel of the scouts to Joshua. It was only a little city. Soon they learnt that it is not by might or wisdom, and that God refuses to fight for Israel with sin unjudged. And Joshua mourns and cries to Jehovah.

Verses 11-15. "Israel hath sinned," is the answer, "and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff. Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they were accursed: neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you. Up, sanctify the people, and say, Sanctify yourselves against to-morrow: for thus saith Jehovah God of Israel, There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel: thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you. In the morning therefore ye shall be brought according to your tribes: and it shall be, that the tribe which Jehovah taketh shall come according to the families thereof; and the family which Jehovah shall take shall come by households; and the household which Jehovah shall take shall come man by man. And it shall be, that he that is taken with the accursed thing shall be burnt with fire, he and all that he hath: because he hath transgressed the covenant of Jehovah, and because he hath wrought folly in Israel." Achan is taken and confesses; the evil is put away.

343 Joshua 8.

But Joshua has to make all the people go up, and a vast deal of trouble is taken before the city is captured. Jehovah will have sin to be felt in its terrible consequences to the entire people, though from one man only.

The people did not see Joshua's spear as is ordinarily supposed. It was a sign of Jehovah's to Joshua here, as Moses' uplifted hands were in Exodus 17.

Verse 26. For Joshua drew not his hand back, wherewith he stretched out the spear, until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai. The people now do get the cattle and the spoil, though Ai is burnt, and made a heap for ever, and its king hanged.

Joshua 9.

Then we see peace made with Gibeon without consulting Jehovah; and the rulers as faulty now, as the people before. They make alliance with the power of the world, they did not ask Jehovah; else they had been kept from such a false position. They received them, as the church has done to the world. The Gibeonites proposed to join them in doing good and putting down the bad. Was it not a great comfort, in the face of so many enemies, to find some friends to help them? The consequence was that, for their oath's sake, Israel was obliged to leave Gibeon standing; and misery was entailed on Israel centuries afterwards. A famine befell them in David's time because Saul slew the Gibeonites.

Joshua 10.

Yet God interposed for Israel more conspicuously than ever immediately afterwards where Gibeon's alliance drew on it a combined attack of five kings of the Amorites. "And there was no day like that before it or after it, that Jehovah hearkened unto the voice of a man: for Jehovah fought for Israel," v. 14. And

many other kings did Joshua smite utterly as the Jehovah God of Israel commanded, returning regularly to Gilgal to encamp, the place of circumcision, that no flesh should glory but he that glorieth should glory only in Jehovah.

344 Joshua 11.

There is another element in the history of Joshua. Hazor, the capital of all those kingdoms, cannot when taken be God's capital. He will not have the chief seat of this world's power for the metropolis of His kingdom. It is the only city of the many that conspired at this epoch which was burnt (v. 13). How different the spirit of Popery! It was glad to get the world's capital for its own. But it is the city of confusion; Rome is Babylon thus viewed. The church of God is heavenly, and we Christians must have heavenly things. How people delude themselves!

Joshua 12.

Jehovah would have His people know their conquests. Hence the detail.

Joshua 13.

When Israel did not carry out the commands of Jehovah as to the Canaanites, these were left as thorns in their sides.

Joshua 14.

Fidelity as the fruit of faith with its abiding strength is precious in Jehovah's eyes, as we see by Caleb.

Joshua 15.

But Judah was not Christ, and the stoutest of Judah's children failed to drive out the Jebusites who dwelt there, till a brighter day - the day of the Beloved.

Joshua 16, 17.

Joseph's children, though not destined to royalty like Judah, get their birthright as far as it could be then.

Joshua 18, 19.

The tabernacle of God is set up at Shiloh, though seven tribes had not yet received their inheritance; and Joshua seeks to rouse them to make good the promised land, casting lots for Benjamin, Simeon, Zebulun, Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, and Dan.

Joshua 20.

Provision is made in the cities of refuge that Jehovah's land should not be defiled by blood, whether by Israelite or by the stranger sojourning in their midst.

345 Joshua 21.

The Levites have their cities defined, though they have no inheritance in the land like their brethren, Jehovah being their inheritance.

Joshua 22.

The altar of the Reubenites on the other side of Jordan gave occasion to the rest for suspicion of the two tribes and a half there; but for the time they held to the name of Jehovah.

Joshua 23.

Joshua in his old age warns Israel that the word is as sure in its warnings for the rebellious as in its promises to the obedient.

Joshua 24.

The people have their history rehearsed from the idolatry of their fathers on the other side of the river in old time, till Jehovah put them in Canaan, and pledge themselves to serve Him; and Joshua departs with the evident consciousness of the precarious tenure that turned on Israel's obedience, however fair appearance might be for a little season.

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