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OUTLINE 1

AT THE BORDER OF CANAAN AGAIN (Joshua 1)

1. The LORD (1:1)

The nation of Israel has again arrived at the border of Canaan. They had been at this border before (see section 3), but now the time has come for them to actually enter Canaan and take possession of it. However, how could they ever do that without Moses, who had died?

To answer that question, it must be clear that Israel's entry into Canaan was not Moses' work; Canaan was a gift from the LORD, who had promised this country to his nation. The beginning of the book of Joshua shows that the LORD takes the initiative. (In the history of redemption, the LORD always takes the initiative.) He commands his nation to advance.

Question 1: Give several examples from redemptive history that show that God takes the initiative. How does this knowledge affect our lives?

Joshua receives the mandate to cross the Jordan (1:2). He passes this order on to Israel (vv.10-18). He does not only pass it on to the leaders but to all of Israel (vv.12-18; section 5 first sentence).

2. Joshua instead of Moses (1:2)

The beginning of this first chapter is remarkable. If you read the page that comes before Joshua 1, in particular Deuteronomy 34:9-12, you will notice that there is a connection between Deuteronomy and Joshua.

The LORD had entrusted his covenant people to the care of Moses. However, Moses had passed away.

The LORD calls Moses “the servant of the LORD”. Read Numbers 12:1-9 to find out what that means.

Question 2: Who in the Bible was called “my servant”? Where do we read about him? This servant died also. However, did he, like Moses, die as a result of his sins? (See also HC, LD 16, Q&A 40 and 42.)

Despite Moses’ death, the LORD fulfils his promises; his work must be completed. For that reason, Joshua must assume leadership. The LORD himself makes sure that the work of Moses would be continued. The LORD makes Joshua competent so that he can become leader (read Deut 34:9). Finally, many years after the Exodus from Egypt, Israel is ready to enter the Promised Land.

Question 3: Moses could not complete God’s work, but would Joshua be able to do so? (See Heb 4:8.)

3. Joshua’s strength (1:3-9)

Joshua’s task as leader is difficult. After Moses’ death Joshua is faced with this task, even though he had no previous experience. Where would he seek his strength?

Question 4: For how many years had Moses led the people of Israel? (E.g., see Num 14:34.)

Using uncompromising language, the LORD repeats his promise to Abraham (v.3). He describes the land in very concrete terms.

Many powerful nations lived in the land of Canaan, especially in the north (cf. 11:4). Joshua was well aware of this fact: he himself had been one of the twelve spies.

Question 5: Read Numbers 13 and 14. What had been the terrible consequence of Israel’s lack of trust in the LORD?