

## Shoes—Take Off Your Shoes....<sup>1</sup>

By Bob Young

Texts: Josh 1:3; Deut 11:24

### Introduction

You may not think of shoes and feet as a Bible subject. Common, familiar. Bible stays a lot. Good lessons in this study. One of the first sermons I heard on shoes: loafers, sneakers, work shoes, dress shoes, running shoes, casual shoes. Put mind at ease—this is not that sermon.

OT shoes were simple pieces of leather tied on the foot with a thong, so easily constructed that their low cost was proverbial, Amos 2:6; 8:6. To be without shoes was a sign of extreme poverty, 2 Chr 28:15; Isa. 20:2. They wore out easily—thus the reference to the Exodus and the shoes lasting. See the nature of shoes also in the reference of John the Baptist to Jesus.

Even in OT times, not all footwear was simple. Ornamental sandals are mentioned in SoS 7:1; Ezek. 16:10 names sealskin as a particularly luxurious material. In Luke 15:22, the shoe seems to be an item of luxury and signifies wealth and acceptance.

Most interesting is that shoes were used to communicate feelings and thinking. The absence of shoes is a sign of grief/mourning in Ezek. 24:17,23. The removal of a shoe was formerly a method of closing a bargain, but later a sign of reproach, Dt. 25:9; Ruth 4:7. Because shoes were not worn indoors, to put one's shoes on was a sign of readiness for activity, Exodus 12:11; Eph. 6:15.

A single long journey wore out a pair of sandals (Josh. 9:5,13) and that one's shoes would not break (Isa. 5:27) or that one's feet would not swell (Dt. 8:4; 29:5) during the wilderness journeying would require miraculous help.

The nature of shoes then and now helps us understand a misunderstanding. We think of foot washing as stinky—but feet were just plain dirty.

Today we study some things signified in shoes. Our title: Take off your shoes... Why were God's people to remove their shoes? What are the lessons for us?

**\*1 HOLY.** Take off your shoes, this is holy ground. Ex. 3:5; Josh. 5:15. Compare Acts 7:33 with Ex. 3:5. Shoes were removed to enter a house, perhaps because of the idea of defilement associated with feet and shoes treading on common ground, thus uncleanness of various kinds.

Even more naturally, shoes were removed when entering a sanctuary, Eccl. 5:1.

Is Joshua 1:3 significant? Feet instead of shoes. May be! Take off your shoes, this is holy ground. The Promised Land was holy, for it was set apart for Israel. Do not defile that which is holy--#1. What is holy? In the NT--a place, no a people.

Need that lesson today. Not in shoes, but we must take care that we do not defile that which is holy, set apart.

May be in things—Lord's Supper emblems, common but set apart. Buildings—perhaps. But lives, our own.

Other people are holy. Respect that, honor that, work within that. The church, our families.

If our lives are holy as they are to be, we walk daily on "holy ground." Do not defile that which is holy.

**\*2 HOME.** Take off your shoes, this is your home. Shoes were not worn indoors, Dt. 28:56, so the absence of shoes was a sign of being at home.

Again, Josh 1:3. What is the significance? Not only are they not to defile that which is holy, but make yourself at home. Don't keep looking at the greener grass on the other side of the fence.

If Israel is to succeed in Canaan, must commit to it. Decide this is home, where I belong, where I can stay, where God wants me.

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Great lesson for the church, family of God, 1 Tim. 3:15. If the church is family, must be a place where we can express and receive love, develop a wholesome self-image, recognize a mutual dependence and upbuilding, know acceptance and warmth. We must be family.

Or again, if the church is a family, is a place where we are at home, can be at home, be ourselves and be comfortable. Where we are accepted in spite of who we are.

Finally, the church as family demonstrates immovable ties, commitment. Physically, we do not flit from one family to another. We commit to the family we have. We must learn this lesson. Leaders, members, in times of busyness, problems, church conflicts.

Take off your shoes—this is your home.

**\*3 HOPE.** Take off your shoes so you can possess your possession. Here is your gift from God, it is yours for the taking, but you must take it.

Often in times past, when lands were conquered, those conquered were required to bow low so the conqueror could place his foot on the neck of the one conquered in a symbolic action.

Possess our possession. Claim your benefits. Israel could not see the power in that challenge. Could see power in the burning bush, but not in possessing their possession.

We are surrounded in today's religious world by people with a similar problem. Can see the power in a miracle, pray for a miracle, declare faith in a miracle, but not see God's power in daily Christian living. Not see the power in claiming God's benefits in prayer, Bible study, regular assembly for worship and study, fellowship with the family.

Josh 1:3, trod on the land, conquer it. Josh 10:24; Ps 8:6; 110:1.

### **Conclusion**

Take off your shoes! Not literally, but figuratively.

Take off your shoes.

- Do not defile that which is holy
- This is your home, everywhere the soles of your feet touch will be yours, claim it, be at home, I am giving you this church as a home, this land as a home. This is where your needs will be met, where you belong, where you can live, and grow old, and belong and be a part.
- Possess your possession. You can conquer it, you can claim it, you can overcome all obstacles.

The ultimate promise—God will bless you.