

JOSHUA

INTRODUCTION

1. AUTHOR – It is reasonable to assume Joshua recorded an account of most of these events (See 24:26). Final writing of the book took place after his death. See 24:29-31.
2. DATE WRITTEN – Approximately 1350 B.C. but possibly later.
3. DATES COVERED – From the death of Moses to the death of Joshua, about 10 years. It includes the conquering of the Promised Land and its division.
4. NAME – "Joshua" means "Yahweh saves" or "The Lord is my salvation." The NT equivalent is Jesus. The name is taken from the key figure in the book.
5. KEY PHRASES – "The Lord has given you..." "Do not be afraid..." "Be strong and courageous"

OUTLINE

1. ISRAEL PREPARES FOR THE CONQUEST. CH 1-5
 - A. A leader is chosen after Moses' death. It is Joshua. (Ch1)
 - B. Two spies report Jericho is afraid. Rahab spares them. (Ch2) See Rahab in the line of Christ in Matthew 1.
 - C. God opens the Jordan River for Israel to cross. (Ch3) This was to parallel the crossing of the Red Sea by the previous generation. It was done as a witness for all nations (4:24).
 - D. Stones are set up as a memorial reminder of God's provision. (Ch4)
 - E. Final preparations are made including circumcision and the covenant. And the manna stopped after 40 years of provision. (Ch5)
2. ISRAEL CONQUERS THE PROMISED LAND. CH 6-12
 - A. Jericho falls as Israel obeys God's Word. Rahab is spared. (Ch6)
 - B. Achan's sin causes defeat at Ai and Achan is stoned. (Ch7)
 - C. Ai is defeated again by obedience to God's orders. (Ch8)
 - D. The Gibeonites deceive Israel into a treaty. (Ch9)
 - E. There were two major military campaigns – Southern (Ch10), and Northern (Ch11)
A list of the kings Israel defeated. They had a record of victory in 31 of 32 battles. (Ch12)
3. ISRAEL DIVIDES THE PROMISED LAND. CH 13-22
 - A. The leaders divided up the land for each of the tribes to receive a proportionate portion. (Ch13-19)
 - B. They allotted cities for the Levites and Cities of Refuge. (Ch20-21)
 - C. The eastern tribes return home. (Ch22 – See Numbers 32:20-22)
4. JOSHUA'S FAREWELL TO ISRAEL. CH23-24
 - A. His farewell speech. (Ch23)
 - B. Israel renews the covenant and Joshua dies. (Ch24)

IMPORTANCE OF THE BOOK OF JOSHUA

1. No opposition can stop God from carrying out His plans. The only thing that did was the disobedience of His people.
2. The Lord kept His promise of giving to Israel the land He had promised to Abraham. Gen 12:7 etc.
3. Prosperity is linked to obedience at Jericho and defeat is linked to disobedience at Ai.
4. Israel's failure to completely eliminate the Canaanites prepares for the difficulties of the Book of Judges. See 13:13, 15:63, 16:10, 17:12, and 19:47.
5. Compare Joshua 11:23 and 13:1. Joshua had led Israel in the decisive battles. It only remained for Israel to possess the land. It is the same with Christ and Satan. Christ has won the battle but we still fight. See Romans 6:11-14. Also there may be a preincarnate appearance of Jesus in the "commander of the army of the Lord" who appears to Joshua at the end of chapter 5.
6. Even Joshua's victories were not the final rest for the people of God. See Hebrews 4:8-11.
7. In reading all the place details in the division of the land, chapters 13-19, be reminded that God had promised them "every place where you set your foot" (1:3). Each place name reminds them God is faithful to His Word. The repetition and detail feels like a hammer bringing the truth of God's faithfulness home over and over. God is faithful. God is faithful. God is faithful. God keeps his word.

8. This book is the first of what are called the "Historical Books" of the Old Testament. This is no history as we are used to it. Our history focuses on politics, economics, human-interest stories and environmental issues. For the Hebrews there is no such thing as secular history. Everything that happens comes about because the world we live in is controlled by a God who is involved in everyday life. If we leave God out of Israel's history, we will never understand what is written, or the way it is written. The only reason for these people to pay attention to people and events was to watch for where God would show up. Even when God does not seem visible, the presence and work of God dominates all the movements of people and nations in the Bible. We are used to newspaper and TV accounts and reading books of history where God is not taken into account at all. God is not a force to be debated or manipulated according to what we want. God is a person to be worshiped or defied, believed or rejected, loved or hated. But all this happens in time and place. (Some thoughts here were taken from Eugene Peterson's "The Message" notes.)

9. One of the key elements that is hard for us to understand is what is called the "holy war" of the Bible. In Joshua, every person in a conquered city was to be put to death. Sometimes all plunder was to be destroyed by burning. Other times there were permitted to keep some or all of it. The Israelites were carrying out God's command. We look back from several thousand years later and we think this was "excessive" at least when not only soldiers but women and children were put to death in Israel's conquest. One issue to keep in mind is God's prophecy in Genesis 15:12-16 when God told Abraham about these events. He said that he would not do it yet because "the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure." God waited nearly 500 more years, patiently giving the inhabitants of Canaan a chance to repent. They never did. Their culture and their religion did not treat women and children well at all. They sacrificed their children and young virgins to try to manipulate God or their gods for what they could gain. The practices of the Canaan tribes were "detestable" in God's sight. He warned Israel not to even try them and to destroy these peoples so that they would not be led into such evil practices. Don't you think we would benefit to see sin just as seriously in our day? Would we not do better in our lives to get rid of all elements of sin in our lives?

Notes by PJW (2003)

JOSHUA

1 – Since Moses was now dead, Joshua was appointed as the new leader of God's people. He had been Moses' assistant. Now he was ready to lead the people into the land God had promised them over five hundred years earlier. As great as Moses was, it is not he who passed on the instructions to Joshua but God. V2 "Moses my servant is dead. Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel." There are several parallels between Joshua and Jesus. Even their names are basically the same. We must be careful not to read into it where it is not there. As God commanded Joshua to be strong and courageous, so we can be strong and courageous in Christ no matter what our battle is. Our inheritance is worth it. God had already given the land to the Israelites. All they had to do was to fight to claim it and divide it. God has already given us every spiritual blessing in Christ. We must only claim them by faith.

2 – This is the story of Rahab. She appears in the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1:5. Joshua sent two spies into the Promised Land to bring back a report. Rahab hid them to protect them. In exchange she was granted her life and the lives of her family. The report the spies brought back is in V24. "Truly the Lord has given all the land into our hands. And also, all the inhabitants of the land melt away because of us." Is the red cord she was to put in the window for when Israel arrived a picture to us of the blood of Christ? When it is what we depend on, it provides protection and provision in time of judgment.

3 – This chapter tells the story of another miracle that God did now for this new generation. V7 "The Lord said to Joshua, 'Today 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.'" It was a great miracle he did for their fathers to bring them across the Red Sea on dry ground. Now he does a miracle for the new generation as they enter the Promised Land by bringing them through the Jordan River on dry ground. V17 "Now the priests bearing the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firmly on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan, and all Israel was passing over on dry ground until all the nation finished passing over the Jordan."

4 – Israel crossed the Jordan River. The Israelites were to establish a memorial by erecting a monument of stones from the bed of the Jordan River. V21-24 "And he said to the people of Israel, 'When your children ask their fathers in times to come, "What do these stones mean?" then you shall let your children know, Israel passed over this Jordan on dry ground. For the Lord your God dried up the waters of the Jordan for you until you passed over, as the Lord your God did to the Red Sea, which he dried up for us until we passed over, so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the Lord is mighty, that you may fear the Lord your God forever.'"

5 – God continued to prepare his people for entry into the Promised Land. The new generation was circumcised as a sign that they belong to the Lord. So each generation of Christians needs to affirm our commitment to Jesus. They celebrated their first Passover and began to eat the produce of the land. The manna that God has provided for the forty years in the desert ceased. The "Commander of the army of the Lord" is probably Jesus, if not in preincarnate form, at least in stature. With Jesus as our commander, we have nothing to fear. V14 "And he said, 'No, but I am the commander of the army of the Lord. Now I have come.' And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshipped and said to him, 'What does my lord say to his servant?'"

6 – Israel captured their first city in the Promised Land. The city was Jericho. The method God commanded was to show that it was God who provided the victory. The people only needed to obey and devote everything to God as a sign that they recognized that he won the victory. V20 "So the people shouted and the trumpets were blown. As soon as the people heard the sound of the trumpet, the people shouted a great shout, and the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they captured the city." The lesson is obvious. When we do things God's way, God accomplishes his purposes and receives the glory. The ways of God look foolish in the eyes of the world. May we obey his ways over ours, for his glory!

7 – Israel moved on confidently to the next battle, against a small town of 12,000. The city is Ai. When they went to fight, they were turned back and several dozen died. This had not happened to them before. The cause was sin. Only one person out of the entire nation had sinned and it impacted the entire nation in defeat. V25 "And Joshua said, 'Why did you bring trouble on us? The Lord brings trouble on you today.' And all Israel stoned him with stones. They burned them with fire and stoned them with stones." Do you feel guilty as you read this chapter? How much more do we need the grace of God through Jesus to be forgiven and to walk in his ways always! We do not take sin nearly as seriously as God does. We are the ones who need to adjust. It seems that this is even more serious for Israel because this was just as they were about to embark on a new stage of their history as a nation.

8 – This time they defeated Ai. V24 "When Israel had finished killing all the inhabitants of Ai in the open wilderness where they pursued them, and all of them to the very last had fallen by the edge of the sword, all Israel returned to

Ai and struck it down with the edge of the sword." Joshua is a picture of Jesus in his leadership when he stays among the people the night before the battle (V9, 13). He also sought God's plan for the next battle.

9 – A group of locals approached Joshua claiming to be from a far land and asking for a treaty of peace. It was a lie. They were from close by. They demonstrated the fear that the Lord had caused among the inhabitants of the land. How foolish the previous generation was to not trust that God would give them victory. There seem to be two lessons from this chapter. They did not consult with the Lord about the Gibeonites, V14 "So the men took some of their provisions, but did not ask counsel from the Lord." However, they kept their oath even when they knew making it was wrong. Later King Saul in an act of zeal for the Lord took out vengeance on these Gibeonites. God punished him and his family for that breaking of the word of the leaders of Israel in 2 Samuel 21. We need to walk so closely to Jesus that we know what is the right thing to do in every instance and not go by "our own understanding."

10 – Several kings conspired against Israel and marched to war against them. V8 "And the Lord said to Joshua, 'Do not fear them, for I have given them into your hands. Not a man of them shall stand before you.'" It was during this battle that the famous incident took place that the sun stood still for about a day. V13 "The sun stopped in the midst of heaven and did not hurry to set for about a whole day." It seems that Joshua and the people learned their lesson for in the next set of battles as described in this chapter they gain victory each time because the Lord fought for them. Notice their total obedience. They put to death or devoted every single person in those cities. We will watch the gradual disobedience in the next chapters. Jesus has already obtained the victory for us over all our enemies.

11 – The Lord gave Joshua victory over all the cities of the north. Note it often says that Joshua obeyed the word of the Lord or the word that was commanded through Moses. This included the Anakim. This was the group that the nation and earlier spies had been so afraid of (Deuteronomy 1:28). He was completely obedient in all commands to destroy all that was to be devoted, even hamstringing the horses. V20 "It was the Lord's doing to harden the hearts that they should come against Israel in battle, in order that they should be devoted to destruction and should receive no mercy, but be destroyed just as the Lord commanded Moses." This was punishment on these nations for their sin. God always punishes sin. In this case he used his promise to Israel to carry out that punishment. Later he used other nations to punish the sin of Israel. So we are to be completely devoted to Jesus because of all he has done for us. We owe him everything.

12 – Remember how frightened Israel was when the spies returned with their report in Numbers 13? These cities were the cities of which they were afraid. All of them were defeated and even more by the army under Moses and Joshua. V7 "And these are the kings of the land whom Joshua and the people of Israel defeated on the west side of the Jordan..." When we do things God's way, through Jesus all the victory is already ours.

13 – This is a pretty difficult chapter to read with all the names and geographical places listed. It is OK to skim over this. However, if you do, understand that you may miss the impact of the faithfulness of God. God promised that he would give to Israel every place where their foot stepped (Joshua 1:3). Every place listed is a specific fulfillment of that promise. It is similar to the way we talk about the blessings God has given us. It is very different to begin to list all those blessings and see the cumulative effect of that list. Joshua divides the conquered land. God has promised us all spiritual blessings will be ours in Jesus. We know that this will be fulfilled because God is faithful. Note also in V22, "Balaam also, the son of Beor, the one who practiced divination, was killed with the sword by the people of Israel among the rest of their slain."

14 – This is the story of the land Caleb was granted after the battles were over. He was a man who believed God and did not give in to the pressure of the report of the other spies. This is now forty-five years later. Caleb is eighty-five but claims he is just as strong for war as he was before. V13 "Then Joshua blessed him, and he gave Hebron to Caleb the son of Jephunneh for an inheritance." Caleb was a man who claimed God's promises and on that basis claimed his land. "Give me this mountain." Jesus is the only one who followed the ways of his Father completely.

15-17 – The leaders prepared the allotment for each tribe. Judah is in ch15. Ephraim is in ch16 and Manasseh is in ch17. It is difficult to read these chapters because of the list of names of the borders and cities. There is no need to try to pronounce each one. People of Joshua's day knew and could probably picture all the details of these descriptions. Every detail of geography strengthens the faithfulness of God in keeping his word that they would conquer every place where the sole of their foot stepped. God will also be faithful to keep all the promises he has made us that are obtained through the death of Jesus. There are early indications of the disobedience committed by Israel that would later cause them all their problems in Judges and the books of Samuel. 15:63 "But the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the people of Judah could not drive out, so the Jebusites dwell with the people of Judah at Jerusalem to this day." 16:10 "However they did not drive out the Canaanites who lived in Gezer, so the Canaanites have lived in the midst of Ephraim to this day but have been made to do forced labor." 17:12 "Yet the people of Manasseh could not take possession of those cities, but the Canaanites persisted in dwelling in that land."

Joshua encouraged the people that with God's help and strength they were able to achieve victory. 17:18 "For you shall drive out the Canaanites, though they have chariots of iron, and though they are strong." These small failures haunted and persecuted the Israelites until David's time. It was not until David's reign many generations later that the victory was achieved. How careful we need to be to make sure that we obey God's commands completely. Any allowance for sin drives a wedge that will only expand. The way we deal with sin is to bring it to God in confession.

18-19 – These are basically the same as chapters 15-17. There are seven tribes that have not claimed their inheritance. 18:3 "So Joshua said to the people of Israel, 'How long will you put off going in to take possession of the land, which the Lord, the God of your Fathers has given you?'" There are many more places named that are the territories of the seven tribes who receive their designated spot by lot. Finally Joshua was given the piece of land that he requested. Again, God is faithful to them and will be faithful to us.

20 – The Cities of Refuge were designated. There were three appointed on the east side of the Jordan for the tribes in those territories. Three more were assigned to the western side. This is the place where one who killed someone can flee to be safe until a trial is conducted to see if he deserves the death penalty. Jesus is our refuge to whom we can flee not only for protection until our guilt is determined but even after our guilt is determined.

21 – In this chapter, cities were designated for the Levites. The key element in this chapter is that the Lord had kept all the promises he had made. See V43-45. "Thus the Lord gave to Israel all the land that he swore to give to their fathers. And they took possession of it and they settled there. And the Lord gave them rest on every side, just as he had sworn to their fathers. Not one of all their enemies had withstood them, for the Lord had given all their enemies into their hands. Not one word of all the good promises that the Lord had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass." The Levites were not given land but only cities to dwell in. Are we content with Jesus and no land? Lord, may Jesus become more satisfying to us in our thinking and life.

22 – It is always a good idea to check out the truth we hear before we act on it. The two and one half tribes that have finished their commitment to the other tribes were released to return home. They had fulfilled every aspect of their word. In returning home, they built a large altar on the border. The western tribes feared that this was an altar in competition with the true altar in Jerusalem. They sent a delegation to talk instead of an army to battle. They were assured that the altar served only a reminder so that the tribes east of the Jordan would not be cut off and disowned from the people of God. V34 "The people of Reuben and the people of Gad called the altar Witness, 'For,' they said, 'it is a witness between us that the Lord is God.'" In every situation, we should seek Jesus first before we act.

23 – Joshua knew that he did not have long to live. This chapter was his sermon to remind the people to continue faithful to God in their lives. The phrases that stand out in this chapter are Joshua's commands to V6 "Be very strong to keep and to do all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses;" V11 "Be very careful, therefore, to love the Lord your God;" and V14 "that not one word has failed of all the good things that the Lord your God promised concerning you. All have come to pass for you; not one of them has failed." What a great incentive and great leadership Joshua provided! V15-16 "But just as all the good things that the Lord your God promised concerning you have been fulfilled for you, so the Lord will bring upon you all the evil things, until he has destroyed you from off this good land that the Lord your God has given you, if you transgress the covenant of the Lord your God which he commanded you, and go and serve other gods and bow down to them. Then the anger of the Lord will be kindled against you, and you shall perish quickly from off the good land that he has given you." Yet the people turned away from the Lord and did not obey. Was it because they were lazy? For whatever reason, it is another example of the sinfulness that is in us as humans and the need we have for the Savior Jesus Christ.

24 – Joshua made one final appeal to the people to be faithful to the Lord. Make a choice. V15 "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." We have the same choices today. Will we return to our former ways from before we were saved? Or will we fall prey to some of the new ways that our culture offers? Or will we choose to serve the Lord. Joshua left no doubt about his choice. "We will serve the Lord." The story of Joshua pictures the story of Jesus. He was the leader God provided for the nation to follow. He led them into battle and into victory to provide all the promises God had made to his people. We must listen to him and his words. Jesus goes beyond Joshua in that he never did fail as Joshua did with the Gibeonites and at Ai.