

JOSHUA (Teacher's Edition):

The Beginning of a New Section of the Bible

This wonderful book is the sixth in the Bible and is in a group of books known as the **Former Prophets** (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings), or the **Historical Books** (Joshua to Esther). These books deal with the history of Israel from the taking of the Promised Land until the Babylonian captivity. They cover about **seven hundred years** in the history of God's chosen people, the nation of Israel.

Major events covered by these books include (1) the settlement of the people in the Promised Land after their escape from Egypt and their years of wandering in the wilderness; (2) the transition from rule by judges to rule by kings; (3) David's anointing as king of the united kingdom; (4) the division of the nation into northern and southern factions; (5) the destruction of the northern kingdom; and (6) the captivity and return of the southern kingdom.

Here are brief summaries of the themes of the twelve books in this significant section of the Old Testament:

Joshua: The capture and settlement of the Promised Land.

Judges: The nation of Israel is rescued by a series of judges, or military leaders. Three of the best-known deliverers were Deborah, Gideon, and Samson.

Ruth: A beautiful story of God's **love and care**.

1 and 2 Samuel: The early history of Israel, including the reigns of **Saul and David**.

1 and 2 Kings: A **political history** of Israel focusing on the reigns of selected kings from the time of Solomon to the captivity of the Jewish people by the Babylonians.

1 and 2 Chronicles: A **religious history** of Israel, covering the same period as 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings.

Ezra: The return of the Jewish people from **captivity** in Babylon to Jerusalem.

Nehemiah: The **rebuilding** of the walls of Jerusalem after the Jewish exiles returned from Babylon.

Esther: God's **care for His people** under gentile rule.

An Outline

Part One: The Conquest of Canaan (1:1--13:7)

I. Israel Is Prepared for the Conquest 1:1--5:15

- A. Joshua Replaces Moses 1
- B. Joshua Prepares Israel Militarily 2:1--5:1
- C. Joshua Prepares Israel Spiritually 5:2-12
- D. The Commander of the Lord Appears 5:13-15

II. The Conquest of Canaan by Israel 6:1--13:7

- A. Conquest of Central Canaan 6:1--8:35
- B. Conquest of Southern Canaan 9:1--10:43
- C. Conquest of Northern Canaan 11:1-15
- D. Conquest of Canaan Summarized 11:16--12:24
- E. Unconquered Parts of Canaan 13:1-7

Part Two: The Settlement in Canaan (13:8--24:33)

I. The Settlement East of the Jordan 13:8-33

- A. Geographical Boundaries 13:8-13
- B. Tribal Boundaries 13:14-33

II. The Settlement West of the Jordan 14:1--19:51

- A. The First Settlement Done at Gilgal 14:1--17:18
- B. The Second Settlement Done at Shiloh 18:1--19:51

III. The Settlement of the Religious Community 20:1--21:45

- A. Six Cities of Refuge 20
- B. Selection of the Levitical Cities 21:1-42
- C. The Settlement of Israel Is Completed 21:43-45

IV. The Conditions for Continued Settlement 22:1--24:33

- A. The Altar of Witness 22
- B. Blessings of God Come Only Through Obedience 23:1--

24:28

- C. Joshua and Eleazar Die 24:29-33

AUTHOR-

The author cannot be determined directly from the Scriptures, and this book poses some interesting dilemmas. Use of the pronouns “us” and “we” in 5:1, 6 shows the author was part of the events recorded and Joshua 24:26 suggests that person was Joshua.

However, the **recording of his death** (24:29-32), as well as events in the book that occurred after his death (as we read in parallel Scriptures in Judges 1 & 18) - e.g. Caleb's conquest of Hebron and the Danite migration- show us **someone else** had to write a **portion of it** as well. Most therefore believe that Joshua wrote the majority of the book and it was probably composed in its **final form** by a **later editor or scribe** founded on the recorded documents Joshua left behind. Hebrews 3:7-4:11 and 11:30-31 give implicit and explicit references to Joshua and the events in the book that bears his name.

WHEN THE BOOK WAS WRITTEN-

This book covers Israel's history under the leadership of Joshua. A commonly accepted date for the death of Joshua is about **1375 B.C.**, so the book must have been completed shortly after this date. Hence, this book covers Israel's history between **1400-1375 B.C.**

ABOUT THE BOOK-

The object of the book is distinctly to furnish a continuation of the history of the Israelites from the point at which it is left in the closing book of the Pentateuch, and at the same time to illustrate the **faithfulness of God** to his word of promise, and his grace in aiding his people by miraculous interference to obtain possession of the land promised to Abraham. A foundational idea of the book is furnished by God's declaration to Joshua, recorded 1, 5, 6, that the work which Moses commenced **he should finish** by subduing and dividing to the tribes of Israel the Promised Land. The book can be seen as setting forth historically the grounds on which Israel laid claim to the land; a claim not only **historical**, but also "**constitutional**" and "**legal**".

The book also illustrates God's grace and power in dealing with his people. Not the history itself, but the meaning and interpretation of the history are of value. Its importance lies in the illustrations it affords of the controlling working of a Divine Ruler who is **faithful to His promises**, loving righteousness and hating iniquity, and swaying the destinies of men in truth. Thus the selection of materials, and the form and arrangement of the book are determined by a **definite aim**: to set forth and enforce moral lessons, and to exhibit **Israel's past** as the working out of a **Divine purpose** which has chosen the nation to

be the recipient of the **Divine favor**, and the instrument for the carrying forward of His purposes upon earth. Hence, the book launches immediately into narratives about the military victories of the Hebrews as they drove the Canaanites out of the land. Joshua's strategy was to divide and conquer. He struck first in central Canaan by taking the city of Jericho and surrounding territory. Then he launched rapid attacks to the south and north. This strategy quickly gave the Covenant People a foothold in the land. After weakening the enemy's position with this strategy, Joshua led numerous minor attacks against them during the next several years. One important message of the Book of Joshua is that **true and false religions do not mix**. Joshua's orders were to destroy the Canaanites **because of their pagan and immoral worship** practices. But these people never were totally subdued or destroyed. Traces of their false religion remained to tempt the Israelites. Again and again throughout their history, the Hebrew people departed from worship of the one true God. This tendency toward **false worship** was the main reason for Joshua's moving farewell speech. He warned the people against worshipping these false gods and challenged them to remain faithful to their great deliverer Jehovah. The point of Joshua's message was, **you couldn't worship these false gods and remain faithful to the Lord**: "But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (24:15). Some people have difficulty with God commanding Joshua to destroy the Canaanites. But behind this command lay God's concern for his Covenant People. He wanted to **remove** the Canaanites' idolatrous **worship practices** so they would not be a **temptation** to the Israelites. This command to Joshua also represented **God's judgment against sin and immorality**. God used Israel as an instrument of **His judgment** against a pagan nation.

A BASIC ASSESSMENT OF THE JOSHUA (THE BASIC THEME)-

According to 1 Cor 10:11 events of the Exodus, the wilderness wandering, and the conquest of Canaan are "**types**"- events from which we can draw **lasting spiritual truths**. "Now these things happened to them as an example," literally, "as types." Accordingly, Joshua is a **type of Christ** as our **conquering commander**. The redemption out of Egypt and the passage of the Red Sea typify our being **baptized** by the Holy Spirit into union with Christ: "And all were

baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea." This redemptive experience foreshadows the position the Christian has by virtue of being in Christ by the Spirit's baptizing work (12:13; Rom 6:2-3; Col 2:9-12). The crossing of Jordan is a type of our death with Christ being **lived out**. When we are saved and baptized, rather than a world of peace, we enter a land of conflict and victory (cf. Eph 6:10-20). Hence, Canaan is not only a type of heaven but a type of our meeting our **spiritual enemies** in **victorious** Christian living. It is considering ourselves "to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Jesus Christ" (Rom 6:11). The Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and others like them may typify our **spiritual enemies** (Eph 6:12).

Remembering that Jesus did not come to gain an **earthly kingdom** and therefore we are not to think in terms of governmental control or political dominance, this great book teaches a lot about **spiritual and moral** warfare. Spiritual warfare is real and intense! Joshua lays the foundation of how we are to battle and win.

In the book, the charge and commission flow like this:

- I. The Canaanite culture was **saturated with evil- human and demonic**
- II. The Israelite troops were **led by God** (5:13-15), were promised power and victory by God's **presence** (1:1-9) and **His miracles** (3:1-17)
- III. They were promised they **would win!** (1:5,8)

This is exactly our NT call! We are told there is an inheritance and are guaranteed victory through God's **presence and miracles!** We are guaranteed final victory! (See Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15-20, Acts 1:8, etc.) Joshua lays the foundation for all this. Just as he was encouraged, so should we be- understanding that we must be **strong and courageous** and not limit God to **previous generations**- God is as active in the present as He was in the past (see 1 Corinthians 16:13). This book also clearly shows that blessings from God like victory, inheritance, provision, peace and rest come through our cooperation with Him in obedience. **FAITHFUL MEDITATION ON HIS WORD AND OBEDIENCE TO IT WILL CAUSE YOU TO PROSPER AND SUCCEED IN EVERY AREA OF LIFE!**

The story of Achan clearly shows that no man or woman **lives to himself or herself**. What every person does **matters**, and the sin of

one affects **many**. The NT relates this theme to the church many times- see 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; Hebrews 12:15; Matthew 18:12-17. If there is one other lasting lesson in this book, it is on spiritual leadership as manifested in Joshua's life. Joshua's life and leadership demonstrate that spiritual maturity is not **independence** from God, but rather **responsive dependence** upon God. He continually sought God, even after the defeat at Ai. In order to lead others (not to mention ourselves) in the way of spiritual conquest and victory, we must **surrender** on all points to Jesus. To lead, we must **follow!** And spiritual pride (remember they thought they could just kill Ai) leads to **defeat!**

A POSSIBLE KEY WORD-

The entire book of Joshua deals with this one thing that I believe should be our key word (and goal in life): **Conquest**.

KEY VERSE(S) AND CHAPTER(S)-

My key verse is also important to my marriage- Carol looked for this as a requirement for a husband. This is also a key to our spiritual success. My key verse is: **Joshua 1:8**. The key chapter would seem to me to be **Joshua 24**, as it reviews God's fulfillment of His promises and challenges the people to review and commit to the Covenant.

JESUS REVEALED IN THE BOOK-

Note: Jesus appears in this book in three ways: by direct revelation, by types (meaning a symbol or a parallel that provides an object lesson), and by illuminating aspects of His character and nature.

- He appears as the commander of the Lord's army in Joshua 5
- The scarlet thread out of Rahab's window that resulted in her life being saved is a type of Jesus
- The cities of refuge are a type of Jesus
- Jesus is our inheritance as He was the Levites' in Joshua 13:33
- Joshua 21:44,45 and 23:14-16 tells us all God's promises came true- this is a revelation of the character of Jesus in Whom all God's promises are yes as we discover in 2 Corinthians 1:20

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE BOOK-

- All God's speaking to Joshua
- The fear of the Lord that came on the people (as in Isaiah 11:2)
- The favor God bestowed on Joshua in the hearts of the people
- All the miracles: the parting of the Jordan, the sun standing still, the destruction of Jericho, etc.

SOME TRUTHS AND APPLICATIONS-

Joshua 1:8

Study, speak, and meditate on the Word- this is the way to success! Courage and strength come from remembering it is God speaking to you! But remember this: Simply knowing God's Word is not enough. You must know it well enough to apply it to life's situations.

Joshua 4:23, 24

Miracles are to result in knowing God alone is powerful and to fear Him only. They are not for personal benefit that we might live apart from the Lord.

Joshua 9: 14-20

Seek God for everything and before every decision. Don't rely on your own smarts. God keeps you to your word, even years later- see 2 Samuel 21:1-3. You just can't make consistently good decisions without His Word and His Spirit.

Joshua 23: 12, 13

Don't be unequally yoked with people not devoted to the same degree you are with God, especially so with members of the opposite sex- it is a snare!

Joshua 24:14, 15, 19-24

Make your decision once for all to follow the Lord! If you don't want the fellowship of His sufferings then bail out. Don't be double minded! If you choose to follow, then yield your heart completely.

Joshua 5:13-15

Let's build a message: