

Adult Bible Class

The Book of Joshua - Lesson 1

Introduction

The book of Joshua is the sixth book of the Bible, immediately following the Five Books of Moses (the Law). *Joshua* is the first of the twelve books of the history of the nation of Israel in their land. In Joshua, the land of Canaan is an inheritance promised by God, waiting to be conquered and occupied.

The promise first came to Abraham 470 years before the time of the opening of the book of Joshua (430 years from Abraham to the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai plus another forty years of wandering in the wilderness - see Galatians 3:17, Exodus 12:40-41, Numbers 32:13 and Deuteronomy 2:7).

Genesis 12:1 (NKJV) Now the Lord had said to Abram:

"Get out of your country,
From your family
And from your father's house,
To a land that I will show you . . .

4 . . . And Abram *was* seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. **5** Then Abram took Sarai his wife . . . and all their possessions . . . and they departed to go to the land of Canaan.

Genesis 15:5 Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them. . . So shall your descendants be."

6 And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.

7 Then He said to him, "I *am* the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it." . . **18** On the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying:

"To your descendants I have given this land. . .

Although Abraham obeyed God and went to the land of Canaan and lived there, camping in place after place, yet he did not truly possess the land. That would come later through his descendants.

Genesis 17:7 And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you.

8 Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.

Though Abraham had eight sons (Ishmael, by Hagar, the Egyptian handmaid; Isaac, by Sarah, his wife; and six sons by Keturah, his wife after Sarah died), yet God said that the promise would come through Isaac.

Genesis 17:19 Then God said: ". . . Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him. **20** And as for Ishmael, I have heard you. Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. . . and I will make him a great nation. **21** But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this set time next year." **22** Then He finished talking with him, and God went up from Abraham.

God's covenant with Abraham was given to Isaac, and his son, Jacob.

Genesis 27:10 Now Jacob . . . dreamed, and behold, a ladder *was* set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

13 And behold, the Lord stood above it and said: "I *am* the Lord God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants. **14** Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

Toward the end of the book of Genesis, we read the story of Jacob's favorite son, Joseph, who was sold by his brothers and taken to Egypt to be a slave. Even in Egypt, wherever Joseph was, he excelled and was promoted - first in Potiphar's house, then in prison, and finally as prime minister of Egypt. When seven years of famine came upon the world, certain events brought Joseph and his family back together.

God told Jacob to move his family to Egypt:

Genesis 46:2 Then God spoke to Israel in the visions of the night, and said, "Jacob, Jacob!". . . "I *am* God, the God of your father; do not fear to go down to Egypt, for I will make of you a great nation there. **4** I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up *again*; and Joseph will put his hand on your eyes."

On his deathbed, Joseph prophesied that the descendants of Israel would inherit the land of Canaan:

Genesis 50:24 And Joseph said to his brethren, "I am dying; but God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land to the land of which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." **25** Then Joseph took an oath from the children of Israel, saying, "God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here."

It would be 215 years after the family of Jacob went down into Egypt that the children of Israel would come out of Egypt. During that time, a pharaoh arose that did not know of Joseph; and because the Israelites multiplied so exceedingly, Pharaoh was fearful that they would outnumber the Egyptians and lead a coup to take over Egypt - so he enslaved them.

Exodus 1:6 (NLT) In time, Joseph and all of his brothers died, ending that entire generation. **7** But their descendants, the Israelites, had many children and grandchildren. In fact, they multiplied so greatly that they became extremely powerful and filled the land.

8 Eventually, a new king came to power in Egypt who knew nothing about Joseph or what he had done. **9** He said to his people, "Look, the people of Israel now outnumber us and are stronger than we are. **10** We must make a plan to keep them from growing even more. If we don't, and if war breaks out, they will join our enemies and fight against us. Then they will escape from the country."

11 So the Egyptians made the Israelites their slaves.

Finally, the people of Israel cried out to God for help, and He sent Moses to lead them out of Egypt to possess the land that was promised so long ago. Through a great show of His strength through ten plagues, God delivered them and brought them first out of Egypt, then through the Red Sea on dry ground, escaping from pharaoh and all the armies of Egypt. The walls of water fell on the Egyptian army and they all drowned - and Israel was saved from her enemies. Next, He led them to Mt. Sinai to receive His law, the Ten Commandments, and other laws for living in their new land.

A nation consists of people, laws, and land. Israel had multiplied almost miraculously in Egypt, so the people were established. God had given them His law at Mt. Sinai. Now it was time for them to enter their land.

However, right when they were on the brink of possessing their land, the Israelites proved that they were an unbelieving people. At the edge of Canaan's land at a place called Kadesh Barnea, twelve spies were sent to look over the land to determine their strategy. However, ten of the spies came back with an evil, unbelieving report which shook the faith of the people of Israel. Only two had faith in God, telling the people that they could indeed possess the land.

Numbers 13:25 (NLT) After exploring the land for forty days, the men returned . . . **27** This was their report to Moses: "We entered the land you sent us to explore, and it is indeed a bountiful country—a land flowing with milk and honey . . . **28** But the people living there are powerful, and their towns are large and fortified. We even saw giants there . . .

30 But Caleb tried to quiet the people as they stood before Moses. "Let's go at once to take the land," he said. "We can certainly conquer it!"

31 But the other men who had explored the land with him disagreed. "We can't go up against them! They are stronger than we are!"

Numbers 14:1 Then the whole community began weeping aloud, and they cried all night . . . "If only we had died in Egypt, or even here in the wilderness!" they complained. **3** "Why is the Lord taking us to this country only to have us die in battle? . . . "Let's choose a new leader and go back to Egypt!"

5 Then Moses and Aaron fell face down on the ground before the whole community of Israel. **6** Two of the men who had explored the land, Joshua. . .and Caleb. . .tore their clothing. **7** They said. . ."The land we traveled through and explored is a wonderful land! **8** And if the Lord is pleased with us, he will bring us safely into that land and give it to us. It is a rich land flowing with milk and honey. **9** Do not rebel against the Lord, and don't be afraid of the people of the land . . . the Lord is with us! Don't be afraid of them!"

10 But the whole community began to talk about stoning Joshua and Caleb.

It was one of the worst moments in Israel's history. Moses interceded for the people which stayed the hand of God from destroying them all. God turned them around and commanded them to wander in the wilderness for forty years until the unbelieving generation (those age twenty and older) died off. Then, the next generation would enter into the promised land (along with Joshua and Caleb, because they had faith in the promises of God).

Though Moses led the people of Israel out of Egypt, it would be Joshua who would lead them into the promised land of Canaan. Moses was a man of the law, but Joshua was a warrior of faith. Moses himself was forbidden to enter the Promised Land because of his sin at Meribah. When the people needed water, he struck the rock in anger instead of speaking to it in faith. This scene was to be a picture of speaking to the Rock, Jesus Christ, for spiritual refreshing. Jesus said in Luke 11:13 (NIV), *"If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"* Because Moses disobeyed God's direct command, He was forbidden to enter Canaan's land, although God did allow him to see it from the top of Mount Pisgah. Moses died without entering in. Joshua would lead Israel in.

Setting the Scene from the Book of Hebrews

During our study of the first five books of Moses, we often went to the New Testament book of Hebrews for clarification. Let's read Hebrews chapter 3 which compares Moses to Jesus and states why the older generation did not enter into Canaan's land:

Jesus Greater Than Moses

Hebrews 3:1 (NIV) Therefore, holy brothers and sisters, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, whom we acknowledge as our apostle and high priest. **2** He was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God's house. **3** Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself. **4** For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything. **5** "Moses was faithful as a servant in all God's house," bearing witness to what would be spoken by God in the future. **6** But Christ is faithful as the Son over God's house. And we are his house, if indeed we hold firmly to our confidence and the hope in which we glory.

Warning Against Unbelief

7 So, as the Holy Spirit says:

"Today, if you hear his voice,

8 do not harden your hearts

as you did in the rebellion,

during the time of testing in the wilderness,

9 where your ancestors tested and tried me,

though for forty years they saw what I did.

10 That is why I was angry with that generation;

I said, 'Their hearts are always going astray,
and they have not known my ways.'

11 So I declared on oath in my anger,

'They shall never enter my rest.' "

12 See to it. . .that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.

13 But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called "Today," so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. **14** We have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original conviction firmly to the very end. **15** As has just been said:

"Today, if you hear his voice,

do not harden your hearts

as you did in the rebellion."

16 Who were they who heard and rebelled? Were they not all those Moses led out of Egypt? **17** And with whom was he angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies perished in the wilderness? **18** And to whom did God swear that they would never enter his rest if not to those who disobeyed? **19** So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief.

The Name "Joshua"

The book of Joshua is named for its key character, Joshua. When we are first introduced to the man Joshua in Numbers 13:8, his name is *Hoshea*, meaning "salvation." But it was changed to *Joshua* when he entered into Moses' service. The name, *Joshua*, is from Hebrew, and it means, "Yahweh is salvation," or "Jehovah is salvation." It is the same name as the Greek, *Jesus*, which also means, "Jehovah is salvation." The main character, Joshua, is definitely a type or picture of our Lord Jesus Christ. Joshua was a leader and conquerer, and He was obedient to the command and will of God.

Types, Shadows, and Pictures

When we study the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt, we see a picture of New Testament salvation. When we study the book of Joshua and the entrance into the promised land, we see a picture of victorious Christian living - Christians who are “entering in” to a new, victorious life. What happened to them in reality is an example to us spiritually. They fought real, physical battles, but we fight our battles in the spiritual realm through prayer and faith, winning the victory in the Spirit. They conquered and possessed real estate in which to live. We conquer and possess - not physical land - but spiritual victories.

For the Christian, the actual land that we will possess someday is the New Jerusalem, described in Revelation, built by God, prepared for us. But in the meantime, we must learn to conquer and possess spiritual territory, living victoriously in Christ in this present world.

Joshua Chapter 1

God’s Commission to Joshua

Joshua 1:1 (NKJV) After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, it came to pass that the Lord spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses’ assistant, saying: **2** “Moses My servant is dead. Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them—the children of Israel.

Moses had many titles in his lifetime (“prince of Egypt,” “shepherd”), but his greatest and most descriptive title is “the servant of the Lord.” Now, Joshua was going to be God’s servant. A servant is someone who accomplishes tasks for his master. Moses’ task was to bring the people out of Egypt. Joshua’s task is to lead the people into the promised land.

During the forty years of wandering, Joshua was Moses’ assistant. God and Moses prepared Joshua for this present time. During the forty years, Joshua led Israelite armies in battle (Exodus 17:8-13). He went with Moses up on the mountain of God (Exodus 24:13). Joshua spent time in the presence of God at the Tent of Meeting (Exodus 33:10-11). Only Joshua and Caleb gave a good report to the people that they were well able to possess the land (Numbers 14:30). God said that Joshua had the spirit of leadership, and Moses laid his hands on him (Numbers 27:18). God specifically said that Joshua will lead Israel to inherit the land (Deuteronomy 1:38).

God always lets His servants know His will. God spoke to His prophets by dreams, visions, or a “still small voice.” God often speaks to us through His Word or through the man of God as he preaches the Word. God speaks to Christians as they seek Him in prayer by impressing upon them His will. Those who have obeyed God’s plan of salvation should seek God’s will continually. As servants, there is much to do, and time is limited.

3 Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses.

God commanded and challenged Joshua - walk through the land and tread upon it. Every place that Joshua and the people walk upon will be theirs! This same command was given through Moses in Deuteronomy 11:24: *“Every place where you set your foot will be yours: Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the Euphrates River to the Mediterranean Sea.”*

Joshua 1:4 From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the River Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your territory.

The same promise of land that was given over and over again to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was reiterated to Moses in Exodus 6:8, *And I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and I will give it to you as a heritage: I am the Lord.* Here, the promise is given to Joshua and the Israelites.

5 No man shall *be able* to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you.

Both Moses and Joshua are types or pictures of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus not only brings us out of the bondage of sin (like Moses), but He also brings us into a new life (like Joshua).

6 Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them.

Multiple times, God tells Joshua, *“Be strong and of good courage!”*

The land they are about to possess is called “an inheritance.” It was promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and since they are the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, it is rightfully theirs to possess.

New Testament Christians are also told about an “inheritance” that is rightfully theirs.

Ephesians 1:13 (NLT) And now you Gentiles have also heard the truth, the Good News that God saves you. And when you believed in Christ, he identified you as his own by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom he promised long ago. **14** The Spirit is God’s guarantee that he will give us the inheritance he promised and that he has purchased us to be his own people. He did this so we would praise and glorify him.

Colossians 3:23 Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. **24** Remember that the Lord will give you an inheritance as your reward, and that the Master you are serving is Christ.

Hebrews 9:15 (NKJV) . . . He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

1 Peter 1:3 (NLT) All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Now we live with great expectation, **4** and we have a priceless inheritance—an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay. **5** And through your faith, God is protecting you by his power until you receive this salvation, which is ready to be revealed on the last day for all to see.

Let's continue in Joshua:

Joshua 1:7 Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. **8** This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. **9** Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God *is* with you wherever you go."

God said He would be with them wherever they went. They were to be strong and ready to act. Fear was not allowed, only confidence that God would do what He said. They had a clear command, and now they were to see it happen. They were to take action and believe God's promises.

God said that He would be with them. For the New Testament Christian, God is with us wherever we go because we have been filled with His Spirit. The Spirit of Jesus writes the law of God on our hearts, motivating us to do His will and works.

Hebrews 8:9 This covenant will not be like the one

I made with their ancestors
when I took them by the hand
and led them out of the land of Egypt.
They did not remain faithful to my covenant,
so I turned my back on them, says the Lord.

10 But this is the new covenant I will make
with the people of Israel on that day, says the Lord:
I will put my laws in their minds,
and I will write them on their hearts.
I will be their God,
and they will be my people.

The Order to Cross the Jordan

Joshua 1:10 Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, **11** "Pass through the camp and command the people, saying, 'Prepare provisions for yourselves, for within three days you will cross over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land which the Lord your God is giving you to possess.'"

The Tribes East of the Jordan River

In Numbers 32, we read that the tribes of Gad and Reuben asked Moses if they could settle in land on the east side of the Jordan River (Gilead). This land was good for pasturing livestock. At first, Moses was taken aback. He asked them, "*Shall your brethren go to war while you sit here?*" But they replied that they would settle their wives and children into the land, then they would go over Jordan and help their brethren possess their territory.

Numbers 32:20 Then Moses said to them: "If you do this thing, if you arm yourselves before the Lord for the war, **21** and all your armed men cross over the Jordan before the Lord until He has driven out His enemies from before Him, **22** and the land is subdued before the Lord, then afterward you may return and be blameless before the Lord and before Israel; and this land shall be your possession before the Lord. **23** But if you do not do so, then take note, you have sinned against the Lord; and be sure your sin will find you out. **24** Build cities for your little ones and folds for your sheep, and do what has proceeded out of your mouth." . . .

Numbers 32:28 So Moses gave command concerning them to. . .Joshua the son of Nun. . . **29** And Moses said to them: "If the children of Gad and the children of Reuben cross over the Jordan with you, every man armed for battle before the Lord, and the land is subdued before you, then you shall give them the land of Gilead as a possession."

This agreement was made before Moses died. Then we read in Joshua:

Joshua 1:12 And to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh Joshua spoke, saying, **13** "Remember the word which Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, saying, 'The Lord your God is giving you rest and is giving you this land.' **14** Your wives, your little ones, and your livestock shall remain in the land which Moses gave you on this side of the Jordan. But you shall pass before your brethren armed, all your mighty men of valor, and help them, **15** until the Lord has given your brethren rest, as He gave you, and they also have taken possession of the land which the Lord your God is giving them. Then you shall return to the land of your possession and enjoy it, which Moses the Lord's servant gave you on this side of the Jordan toward the sunrise."

16 So they answered Joshua, saying, "All that you command us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. **17** Just as we heeded Moses in all things, so we will heed you. Only the Lord your God be with you, as He was with Moses. **18** Whoever rebels against your command and does not heed your words, in all that you command him, shall be put to death. Only be strong and of good courage."

There were two and a half tribes that possessed land on the east side of the Jordan River - land that was excellent for pasturing herds and flocks. Although the tribes of Reuben, Gad and half of the tribe of Manasseh had already settled into their inheritance, they were commanded to help their brethren fight - to cross over the Jordan River with their brethren and help them fight the Canaanites, then they could return to their families and possessions on the east side of the Jordan River. This they were willing to do. They were willing to keep their vow.

Their wives and little ones were to stay with the livestock. Some people's calling in life is to take care of things while others fight the battles. This is a biblical principle. Not everyone's spiritual duty is the same. Some obey God by doing the practical things of life.

The Reubenites, Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh did not isolate themselves on their side of the Jordan. They participated in what the whole nation was doing. God has a vision and a plan, and we are all to help accomplish it. They were not content to receive for themselves, but they wanted to see their brethren receive their inheritance as well. They were willing to give of themselves to make it happen.