

Joshua: Walking by Faith, Growing in Grace

An Introduction to Joshua

Joshua 1:1-2

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HDBC

What do you think about first, when you think about the book of Joshua? Most will mention Jericho and how the walls came down. Some may think of the embarrassing defeat at Ai. A few might remember Joshua's important statement *as for me and my house we will serve the Lord*, found at the end of the book.

These are all key events recorded in this book. But there is much more found in these 24 chapters. This book also contains the account of the *sun and moon standing still in the sky*, of possible civil war that almost erupted, of the cities of refuge, designed to end vigilante justice.

It is the historical account of the conquest of the land of promise, Canaan. It tells the incredible story of how the Israelites crossed the Jordan River and methodically occupied the land which the Lord gave to them. The land we know of today as Israel.

But it is more than a history book. This is divine Scripture. So, even as we are learning the history of Israel, we are also concerned with spiritual truths and principles that are woven into these pages. As we study the history we will also be looking for those spiritual principles which will impact our lives.

Today I want to lay the foundation for the study of this book. We will not go over every verse, but will deal with every major section and every major event. Always we will keep our eyes open for glimpses of Jesus, pictures of our salvation, and of the providential work of God in that time that still impacts us in our time.

Read Joshua 1:1-2

1. The Man

The book receives its title from the main character in the book. There is a clear shift in focus with the beginning of this book. There were many essential characters in Genesis. Adam and Eve. Noah. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. **Then one character dominated the next four books of the Bible, Moses.** Not only did he dominate the pages of four books of the Bible, but he spanned a forty-year period in Israel's history.

He was respected, consistent, faithful. The first-time reader of the Bible might have assumed that the rest of the Bible would be about him. But the opening words of Joshua, make it clear that there is a new lead character. With the words, ***Moses, my servant is dead***, God declared a changing of the guard.

Joshua was Moses' successor and a very able leader of the Israelites. He must certainly have known that this day would likely come. Yet, it also must have been overwhelming when it happened.

Mr. and Mrs. Nun named their boy ***Hoshea***, which means *deliverance*. Moses changed his name to ***Joshua***, which means ***Yahweh is deliverance***, or ***Yahweh delivers or saves***. It is the Hebrew name that is equivalent to the New Testament name of ***Jesus***. So, already, we see that Joshua can be seen in many ways **as a type or picture of the coming Jesus.**

What do we know about Joshua? He came out of slavery in Egypt. He is first seen as the military commander who defeated the Amalekites in the wilderness. He was a close confidante and aid to Moses. He accompanied Moses up to Mount Sinai. He was one of the original 12 spies sent into Canaan. He and Caleb were the only two who wanted to trust God enough to take the land.

When Moses died, God appointed Joshua to become the new leader of the Israelite people. There is only speculation about how old he was when Moses died. Best guess is that he was somewhere between 60

and 80. He would surely about been at least 20 years old when he left Egypt and we know that he spent 40 years on the wilderness. He died at the age of 110.

2. The Author

The book's author is not listed. The Talmud and some rabbis attribute it to Joshua, himself, with some parts written by others. Joshua may have written some parts of the book, but there is no indication that he was the main author. So, we really do not know.

3. The Purpose

Joshua was written to provide **an interpretive history of one slice of Israel's history** as a people. It offers a look at how God worked to bring about His plan to settle them in the land of Palestine. And it reviews their reactions to His working in their lives.

4. The Date

Assuming 6000 years of history since creation, here is a suggested timeline of some of the major Bible events. Approximate dates.

4000 BC – Creation

2500 BC – The Flood

2000 BC – Birth of Esau and Jacob

1800 BC – Death of Joseph

1525 BC – Birth of Moses

1446 BC – Exodus from Egypt

1406 BC – Moses dies, Joshua is commissioned, Israel enters the land.

400 years before David becomes king.

1000 years before last prophet, Malachi.

1400 years before the birth of Jesus.

5. The Themes

There are several important themes revealed in the book.

1) The Land

The land of Israel was given to the Jewish people by God. It was His divine purpose that this land would be theirs. Over the years, conflicts and wars have raged over the land. But the bottom line is that it is Israel's land because God gave it to them. It is important to remember that this was a fulfillment of God's promise to his people.

This is certainly the major theme of the book. From almost the beginning of their history the people of Israel are tied to land, and not just any land, but to this land. It was a promise made to Abraham from the very beginning. The people of Israel would not be a nomadic people but a people with real estate. **They would be a nation-state in every sense of the word.**

2) The Faithfulness of God

This was more than just a conquest of a piece of real estate. It was a fulfillment of promises that go all the way back to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God said He would give it to them, and He did. The book of Joshua is a living example of the faithfulness of God to keep His promises. Think about the promises God has made to you.

He will never leave you.

He will provide a place in Heaven for you.

He will comfort and encourage you.

He will never disinherit you.

He will forgive your sins, permanently.

He will guide your steps and deliver you from Satan.

3) Obedience

Importance of being obedient to God, regardless of the difficulty of the task is illustrated again and again in the pages of this book. We see it in the plan for crossing the Jordan, the plan for conquering Jericho, and in the plans for dividing the land among the various tribes of people. When they were obedient, things went well. When they were not, trouble followed.

4) Holiness in Worship

Several passages reveal this. Joshua taking his shoes off in the presence of God. The circumcision of the people before entering the land. References to the tabernacle (tent of meeting) and to altars are reminders of the importance of holiness in worship.

5) Godly Leadership

Important to recognize that God raises up leaders for particular reasons at particular times. It is important that the people respond to God-called leaders regardless of who they are. We also are reminded of the importance of cultivating leaders in the current generation who can step up and lead in future generations.

This is one of the important roles of our Discipleship Pastor. This person will help refine and improve our process for making and cultivating disciples, which will result in leadership development. We need Godly leaders **in our churches, our homes, our nation, our schools, our cities, our kid's activities, civic organizations.**

6) Rest

Remember that entering the land of Canaan is a picture of the rest for the people of God. An end to the wanderings in the wilderness. It is realizing God's promised gift. However, it is not primarily a picture of Heaven. **Songwriters and poets have led us to believe this.**

They've picture ***crossing the Jordan river*** as crossing over from this life into Heaven. However that is not the best understanding. When they crossed the Jordan river they were not free from the struggles and conflicts of this life. They still had wars to fight. We will have no conflicts or wars or defeats in Heaven.

Crossing into the promised land is a picture of us entering into a covenant relationship with God through Jesus, and all that comes with it. **In a loose sense, then, it is a picture salvation** and all that

comes with it. But even more specifically, it is a picture of the **rest that we find in Christ**.

They entered by faith. We enter salvation by faith.

Not all entered. Many rejected it and died outside.

Entering did not end their pain, suffering or battles.

God promised to be with them all the way through, and He was.

At times they experienced God's discipline.

At times they experienced His miraculous deliverance & protection.

These are all things we experience after our salvation but before we get to Heaven. They picture what living for Christ in a broken world is like.

To quote Warren Wiersbe: Canaan represents the Christian life as it ought to be: conflict and victory, faith and obedience, spiritual riches and rest. It is a life of faith, trusting Jesus Christ, our Joshua, the Captain of our salvation, to lead us from victory to victory.

So, have you entered into the promised land? **I don't mean Israel. I mean salvation in Christ.** You can stand on one side of the river and look over all you want, but it will not change your destiny or your destination. And it will not change your relationship with God. **Most of those who came out of Egypt came right to the edge, were invited to cross over, were promised victory and deliverance from God, yet they turned back.** Notice this. God respected their decision. He allowed them to say **no**. But with that **no**, they were turned back into the wilderness never to be invited again.

You can say **no** to God, but understand that your **no** will bring serious consequences that you will have to live with in this life and in the next.

I'll leave you with the words of God to Joshua. **Arise, and cross this Jordan.**

Maybe God saying to you, arise, put your faith in Jesus for your salvation.