

The Message of the Old Testament

A Book-by-Book Study

JOSHUA

Background

The book of Joshua is named for its leading character. The book's author, however, is not explicitly mentioned. While the book depicts Joshua writing (Josh. 8:32; 24:26), it does not claim he wrote the book. Indeed, the repeated references to something existing "to this day" (see 4:9; 5:9; 6:25; etc.) seem to suggest a significant lapse of time between the events and the book's final form. Also, the narrator in Joshua 10:13 cites what may be an earlier record of Joshua's deeds. (ESV Study Bible)

Determining the date of the book of Joshua is difficult because, as with many other OT books, it may have been edited as it became part of the growing corpus of OT texts. Its final editing may well have taken place in the exilic period (post-587 b.c.), but its original composition was likely much earlier. (ESV Study Bible)

How We Got Here

- ▶ God makes a promise to Abraham
- ▶ Jacob's sons sell their brother into Egyptian slavery
- ▶ Jacob moves to Egypt to be preserved in a time of famine
- ▶ After 430 years of oppression, God uses Moses to bring the people out of Egypt to the threshold of the Promised Land.
- ▶ Following a failure of faith, the Israelites wander for 40 years after which they return. They are poised yet again to conquer the land.

Contents of Joshua

Three Basic Divisions

- 1-12: The Conquest of Canaan
- 13-22: The Division of the Land
- 23-24: The Final Words of Joshua

Historical Questions Answered by the book of Joshua

1. Why is that pile of _____ sitting by the Jordan? 4:19-24
2. Why is this place called Gilgal? 5:1, 9
3. Why do _____ and her descendants live among us; why wasn't she destroyed with everyone else in Jericho? 6:24-25
4. Why is that heap of stones in the valley? 7:19-20; 25-26
5. Why is that heap of stones there by the gate? 8:24-29
6. Why are the Gibeonites working and living _____? 9:22-27
7. Why are these stones set up outside the cave? 10:22-27
8. Why are there still people of Geshur and Maacah east of the Jordan? 13:13
9. Why are the Jebusites in Jerusalem and the Canaanites in Gezer? 15:63; 16:10

Lessons to be Learned

1. The People choose to _____ the land and destroy their enemies.

1-5 - - the people:

send spies into the fortified city of Jericho

Cross the Jordan River

Consecrate themselves to the Lord

Prepare themselves for their first military attack

6 - - Jericho is conquered as God topples the walls miraculously

7- 8 - - After a setback Ai is taken

9-10 - - The People defeat key cities in the southern part of Canaan

11 - - Israelite conquest of northern cities

11:16-20 - - So Joshua took all that _____, the hill country and all the Negeb and all the land of Goshen and the lowland and the Arabah and the hill country of Israel and its lowland 17 from Mount Halak, which rises toward Seir, as far as Baal-gad in the Valley of Lebanon below Mount Hermon. And he captured all their kings and struck them and put them to _____. 18 Joshua made war a long time with all those kings. 19 There was not a city that made peace with the people of Israel except the Hivites, the inhabitants of Gibeon. They took them all in battle. 20 For it was the _____ doing to harden their hearts that they should come against Israel in battle, in order that they should be devoted to destruction and should receive no _____ but be destroyed, just as the Lord commanded Moses.

➡The conquest of Canaan was not a campaign for political control, like most of our wars today. It was a campaign to utterly _____ those living in the land.

Chapters 6-10 are full of verses like this:

“They devoted the city to the Lord and destroyed with the sword _____ living thing in it—men and women, young and old, cattle, sheep and donkeys” (6:21)

They did this throughout the land, and finally, “the land had rest from war” (11:23; 14:15).

The fact that God’s people conquered Canaan is not a reality removed by too much time and space to be relevant to us. “It foreshadows what God is doing today as he calls together his people into his place under his rule. Having led this _____, Joshua was a type of Jesus Christ, our great captain who has conquered not a passing earthly kingdom but sin and sin’s horrible offspring, _____. And Christ calls us to follow in his train. All Christians enter into the victory that Christ won for us. And ministers of the Word of God are particularly called to follow our captain as guardians, protectors, and guides of God’s people. (Dever, 182)

The fact that God’s people conquered Canaan with such _____ is also a type of the nature of spiritual conflict in which every follower of Christ is called to engage in our very own lives. It is the conflict involved in the work of sanctification. We are to make no _____ with enemies of holiness. We are to take no prisoners. We are to be _____ toward everything that stands between us and the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 5:16-17

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For the desires of the flesh are _____ the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

Ephesians 6:10-12

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his _____. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Hebrews 12:1b, 3-4

let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, . . .

3 Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. 4 In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your _____.

Matthew 5:29-30

29 If your right eye causes you to sin, _____ and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. 30 And if your right hand causes you to sin, _____ and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.

2. The People vow to fear and obey God.

2.1 They promise to obey the Lord's spokesman.

1:16-18 - - 16 And they answered Joshua, "All that you have commanded us we will _____, and wherever you send us we will _____. 17 Just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you. Only may the Lord your God be with you, as he was with Moses! 18 Whoever rebels against your commandment and disobeys your words, whatever you command him, shall be put to _____. Only be strong and courageous."

2.2 They practice circumcision and observe Passover.

5:7 - - 7 So it was their children, whom he raised up in their place, that Joshua circumcised. For they were uncircumcised, because they had not been circumcised on the way.

5:10 - - While the people of Israel were encamped at Gilgal, they kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month in the evening on the plains of Jericho.

2.3 After the defeat of and the killing its king, the people listen to Joshua read the entire law.

8:34-35 - - And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessing and the curse, according to all that is written in the Book of the Law. 35 There was _____ of all that Moses commanded that Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel, and the women, and the little ones, and the sojourners who lived among them.

2.4 At the end of the book, while Joshua conveys the seriousness of their choice, the people renew their covenant with the Lord.

24:14-24 - -

Now therefore fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. 15 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."

16 Then the people answered, "Far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods, 17 for it is the Lord our God who brought us and our fathers up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and who did those great signs in our sight and preserved us in all the way that we went, and among all the peoples through whom we passed. 18 And the Lord drove out before us all the peoples, the Amorites who lived in the land. Therefore we also will serve the Lord, for he is our God."

19 But Joshua said to the people, "You are not able to serve the Lord, for he is a holy God. He is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins. 20 If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, then he will turn and do you harm and consume you, after having done you good." 21 And the people said to Joshua, "No, but we will serve the Lord." 22 Then Joshua said to the people, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the Lord, to serve him." And they said, "We are witnesses." 23 He said, "Then put away the foreign gods that are among you, and incline your heart to the Lord, the God of Israel." 24 And the people said to Joshua, "The Lord our God we will serve, and his voice we will obey."

The vow is one thing and the doing is another. In Joshua there are examples of obedience by the people in which the people experience remarkable _____ (the fall of the walls, the defeat of cities and their kings).

But there are also instances of great consequence when people disobey and neglect God.

Consequences for disobedience and neglect:

Disobedience of God's explicit commands is called a sin of _____. Such a sin occurred when an Israelite named Achan disobeyed the explicit command of God. He took things from Jericho the Israelites had been commanded to destroy. These were not needless things but dangerous things.

Joshua warned the tribes of the danger to all the nation if there was disobedience by one saying, (22:20) "Did not Achan the son of Zerah break faith in the matter of the devoted things, and wrath fell upon all the congregation of Israel? And he did not perish alone for his iniquity."

Consequences for disobedience and neglect:

Failure to do what ought to be done is called a sin of _____. Such a sin occurred when the Israelite leaders made a covenant with the Gibeonites. They heard their story and examined their provisions. But they did not inquire of the Lord, who had explicitly told them not to make an treaties with the peoples of the land.

9:14-15 - - So the men took some of their provisions, but did not ask counsel from the Lord. 15 And Joshua made peace with them and made a covenant with them, to let them live, and the leaders of the congregation swore to them.

As a result a non-Israelite nation was given a place in the land.

Further disobedience mostly pertains to the failure to completely drive out the inhabitants.

This is the reality of the struggle of _____. Hebrews 12 says we are to throw off every encumbrance and the sin which so easily besets us. Paul tells us to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires" (Romans 13:14).

The lesson to be learned is to fear and obey God and watch for the daily battle of sanctification both in terms of obeying God and not failing to do what we ought.

3. The explanation for the success of God's people is that God is the one who fights for them.

1:8-9 - -

8 This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful 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 courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is _____ wherever you go."

3:5 - -

Then Joshua said to the people, "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow _____ will do wonders among you."

5:15-16 - -

When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing before him with his drawn sword in his hand. And Joshua went to him and said to him, "Are you for us, or for our adversaries?" 14 And he said, "No; but I am the commander of the army of the _____. Now I have come." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped and said to him, "What does my lord say to his servant?" 15 And the commander of the Lord's army said to Joshua, "Take off your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so.

10:42 - -

And Joshua captured all these kings and their land at one time, because the Lord God of Israel _____ Israel.

23:3 - -

And you have seen all that the _____ has done to all these nations for your sake, for it is the Lord your God who has fought for you.

All the Bible's history, and certainly this book's history has _____ at the center. If we want to understand the Bible, or history, or our lives, we must see this fact. God is at the center of everything! Joshua led the people in conquering the land, but _____ had fought for his people and _____ them the land. God sovereignly accomplishes _____ every purpose.

And just as he was sovereign in Joshua's day, so he is sovereign today over nations and history.

If you are a Christian, you have experienced God's good sovereignty in a most personal and miraculous way. He has given you a new _____. He has forgiven your _____. He has given you a new affection for him. _____ of these things could you give yourself.

Look also at your own _____: do you not see the hand of God? Surely you do not ascribe your obedience to your own virtue? Did you really obey in this or that instance? Yes, you did! But why did you obey? Oh, be patient and humble enough to consider this carefully. See the sovereign goodness of God even in the smallest obediences. Did you really succeed in this project or in that struggle? Yes, you did! But why did you succeed? Behold again the sovereign goodness of God to you. In God's great and sovereign goodness, he has acted to thwart your very plans to sin because he loves you so.

Even in your _____, can you not see God's overruling hand? And when you cannot see it, can you not still believe it is there? God often moves in ways that are mysterious to us. As we read Romans 8:28, he makes all things work together for good for those who love God and are called according to his purpose. So he worked for the Israelites' good through the foolish treaty their leaders made with the Gibeonites. [He brought about an attack on the Gibeonites which resulted in a great victory for the Israelites.] God uses, turns, and redeems the Israelites' disobedience. (Dever, 190)

And he does the same for all who are His.

4. The hope of God's people is that God keeps his promises and perseveres with them.

Genesis 17:8 - -

"And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God."

23:14 - -

"And now I am about to go the way of all the earth, and you know in your hearts and souls, all of you, 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 _____ of them has failed."

God is faithful. He _____ his word and he _____ his word. Every pile of stones in the land was to be a testimony of his faithfulness and perseverance. He does what He does to make an impact about himself:

4:23b-24 - -

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, 24 so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the _____ is mighty, that you may _____ the Lord your God forever."