

If you are a believer whose only interest is getting to heaven, you won't like this next study. But if you are a believer whose interest is in becoming a strong and courageous soldier who accomplishes powerful things for God, you will love this study of the book of Joshua.

The stories in the book of Joshua are some of the most exciting and dramatic in the entire Bible. Joshua teaches us that **conflict is always a prelude to conquest**. **Struggles always precede success**.

William R. Newell, the Bible teacher and friend of D. L. Moody, wrote these powerful words about Joshua: "We have before us now a book of great delight to the spiritual Christian. All through the Christian centuries, this book of Joshua has yielded priceless treasures to many saints. For those who have been content merely to 'get to Heaven,' this book has not perhaps presented any special attractions; but those who have been warrior-saints, who were determined to 'reign with Christ' at whatever cost (Rom. 8:17; II Tim. 2:12; Rev. 2:26, 27), have ever found a very fortress of strength in this wonderful book of Joshua. No book is *fuller* of encouragement, wisdom and invigoration for the spiritual soldier. This land is to be possessed, these deadly enemies, the conditions of successful occupation, the Jordan-crossing, the successive conflicts, the division of the land—all these things are of intense interest to the instructed Christian mind" (*Studies in Joshua-Job*, p. 33).

We all have enemies to battle. We all have a race to run. We all want to fight a good fight and Joshua is a book that encourages us to remain faithful even in the face of impossible odds. This book forces us to face things and fight things. This book is a rebuke to complacency and mediocrity. In the next few weeks, we want to take you on an amazing journey through this powerful book.

To begin our journey, we would like to ask and answer eight introductory questions:

**INTRODUCTORY QUESTION #1** – Why study the book of Joshua?

**Reason #1** - Because Joshua is one of only 66 inspired books found in the Bible.

**The book of Joshua is an inspired book of God that is found in the Bible. This makes it one of only 66 inspired books of God in existence. It is a rare inspired book because it is the first book of the Bible which bears in its title the name of a person.**

In every O.T. listing, whether Hebrew or Greek or English, **Joshua is the sixth book of the Old Testament**. The fact that Joshua is an inspired book of God has "never been disputed." The fact that it is the sixth book of the Old Testament has "never been disputed."

The only thing that has been questioned concerning Joshua is the classification of the book. In our English Bibles, Joshua is the sixth book but is listed as the first of the twelve historical books (Joshua-Esther).

This is based on the Greek Septuagint which breaks the O.T. down into four categories–  
**1) Pentateuch** (Gen.-Deut.); **2) Historical Books (Joshua-Est.)**; **3) Books of Poetry & Wisdom** (Job-Song of Sol.); **4) The Prophets** (A. Major Prophets - Is.-Dan.; B. Minor Prophets - Hos.-Mal.)

The Hebrew Bible breaks the O.T. down into three categories: 1) The Law (Gen.-Deut);  
2) The Prophets - A. Former Prophets (**Josh-II Kings**, excluding Ruth); B. Latter Prophets - (Is.-Mal., excluding Daniel and Lamentations; 3) The Writings.

The Hebrew text of Joshua was found in Qumran Cave #4 in the Dead Sea Scroll find. Dr. Donald Madvig says concerning the Hebrew text of Joshua, “The text of Joshua is in an excellent state of preservation...” (Joshua, p. 246). When compared to the Hebrew Masoretic text written about 900-1000 A.D., the Qumran Cave text that was written about 100 B.C., affirms the reliability of the manuscripts.

So Joshua is a rare inspired book of God and we will study it. This is a book from God to man and it is more dramatic and dynamic than any non-fiction or fiction book you will ever read.

**Reason #2** - Because Joshua is a book that shows God wants His people strong and courageous in their trust in Him no matter what they face.

In the very first chapter, the words “be strong and courageous” are mentioned four times–1:6, 7, 9, 18. It also occurs in Joshua 10:25. God wants His people strong and courageous and this is a book that can help produce that in us.

Every believer faces obstacles. Every believer faces his or her share of enemies. In the face of this, we have the Word to obey and a war to fight and God wants us to be strong and courageous in moving forward for Him, and in doing so we will win.

**Reason #3** - Because Joshua is a book that shows God is faithful to fulfill His promises to His people.

God promised that He would give Israel a land and in this book of Joshua, He does that. But the total dimensions of the land that has been promised to Israel, she has never had. Yet God promises that one day He will give her every inch of it. Joshua is a book that establishes that God is a God of His Word. He will always do what He has promised to do.

A. C. Gaebelain said that one time an Israelite leader said to him that they were trying to buy the land of Israel a little at a time. He said we asked the leader “If you had a horse stolen by a thief and you knew who the thief was, would you go to him and offer him money for your horse? He said that would not make any sense. He said you are trying to buy back your land from powers that have no right to have it. One day you will have that land because God has promised it to you.

## INTRODUCTORY QUESTION #2 – Who wrote Joshua?

The honest answer to this question is we really don't know. **Jewish tradition holds to the belief that the bulk of the book was written by Joshua himself, with minor additions added by Eleazer after Joshua died (24:29), and Phinehas after Eleazer died (24:33).** In fact, the Talmud, the Jewish commentary of law and tradition says, "Joshua wrote his own book."

There are **five main facts** we may glean about the author:

**Fact #1** - The author was an eyewitness of the events that happened in the book. **5:1, 6**

The use of the first person plural "we" and "us" indicates the one writing was a participant in the events. The pronoun of the Hebrew text in **5:1** is "we," not "they." Both the KJV and NIV translate the pronoun "we" and the NASV follows the Septuagint and translates it "they."

**Fact #2** - The author was Jewish. **5:6**

The writer was one of the sons of Israel who believed he was entitled to the Promised Land.

**Fact #3** - The author of certain parts of the book was Joshua. **8:30, 32; 24:26**

No one can deny that Joshua did write a portion of this book.

**Fact #4** - The author was a contemporary of all the people and all the events.

The writer lived through the amazing things that happened in this book:

- 1) When Joshua was being written, the memorial stones still stood. **4:9; 7:26**
- 2) When Joshua was being written, contemporary names of places were still operative. **5:9**
- 3) When Joshua was being written, Rahab was still alive. **6:25**
- 4) When Joshua was being written, destructive evidences of victory still existed. **8:28-29**
- 5) When Joshua was being written, the Gibeonites were still serving Israel. **9:27**
- 6) When Joshua was being written, hiding places were still known. **10:27**
- 7) When Joshua was being written, certain people were still living with Israel. **13:13**
- 8) When Joshua was being written, the Jebusites still inhabited Jerusalem. **15:63**
- 9) When Joshua was being written, certain Canaanites were living and serving Israel. **16:10**
- 10) When Joshua was being written, the writer documented Joshua's final speech. **23:9**
- 11) When Joshua was being written, Tyre had not yet conquered Sidon. **13:4; 19:28**  
Tyre conquered Sidon in the 12<sup>th</sup> century B.C., indicating the author lived before this date.

The writer of this book lived these things. Irving Jensen writes: "The minute details and vivid descriptions of such events as the crossing of the Jordan, the capture of Jericho, and Joshua's farewell message point to on-the-spot observation and participation" (*Joshua*, p. 10).

**Fact #5** - The author of most of the book was one author.

There is a unity to the book. The use of Hebrew, its style and organization indicate that most of the book was written by one author. For example, there is a clear correspondence between what is written in 1:12-18 and 22:1-6.

Dr. Gleason Archer said, "Taking all of this evidence together, it seems to point to substantial composition of Joshua by the man after whom the book was named, and supplementary material (also inspired) very likely Eleazar or his son Phinehas" (*A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, pp. 270-271).

**Our conclusion is that Joshua himself wrote most of the book.**

**QUESTION #3** – When was Joshua written?

Two key O.T. passages can help us zero in on the date of the book:

**(Key Date Passage #1)** - I Kings 6:1

According to this text, the Israelites left Egypt 480 years before the fourth year of Solomon's reign. This means they left Egypt 480 years before 966 B.C.. What that means is they left Egypt in 1446 B.C. ( $966 + 480 = 1446$ ). Since the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness for 40 years, **we may conclude that the events of the book of Joshua begin in 1406 B.C.** ( $1446 - 40 = 1406$ ).

**(Key Date Passage #2)** - Judges 11:26

In this verse, Jephthah, the ninth judge of Israel, says the period of time from the time Israel entered the land until his time was 300 years. Israel crossed the Jordan and entered the land in 1406 B.C.. Jephthah judged 300 years later at 1106 B.C. ( $1406 - 300 = 1106$ ). Since Solomon was in the fourth year of his reign in 966 B.C., Jephthah judged Israel 140 years before Solomon ( $1106 - 966 = 140$ ). **So 300 plus 140 years plus 40 years wandering in the wilderness equals exactly 480 years, which again places the date at 1406 B.C.**

Now if we assume that the actual events of taking the land took about seven years, the book of Joshua was written somewhere around the years 1399 B.C. ( $1406 - 7 = 1399$ ). **We cannot be far from the actual date to say Joshua was written about 1400 years before the birth of Jesus Christ.**

**QUESTION #4** – How unique is the book of Joshua?

In many ways, the book of Joshua stands totally alone in the Old Testament. Fighting in and for the Promised Land is a theme often seen in several O.T. books. In fact, we see this even to this day.

In the O.T. we have the record of the Assyrians, the Babylonians, and the Persians invading the Promised Land in an attempt to take it. **But in every one of these instances, they did so as a fulfillment of a Divine judgment of God as a punishment against His people.** Most of the time Israel's land wars are due to her unfaithfulness.

Joshua is the only book where the fighting for the land is a fulfillment of Divine blessing. This is one book in which the land wars are signs of faithfulness. In other words, **Joshua is the only book in which God is positively blessing His people in the war battles for the land. The fighting in the book of Joshua is not about a judgment of God; it is about the blessings of God and the will of God.**

Sometimes it is right to fight and sometimes the battle and warfare are not signs of Divine displeasure, but Divine Blessing. Sometimes God wants us fighting as His specific will. But when this is the will of God, we may be certain He is right there fighting with us.

**QUESTION #5** – How does Joshua relate to the rest of the O.T. books?

There is a very simple threefold outline of the O.T. as it relates to Israel and her land:

- 1) Some O.T. books discuss Israel going to the land (Genesis-Deuteronomy).
- 2) Some O.T. books discuss Israel in the land (Joshua-II Kings).
- 3) Some O.T. books discuss Israel chased out of the land (Isaiah-Malachi).

**Joshua is specifically the book that describes Israel's entrance into her Promised Land.**

In **Genesis** 12:1-3, God promises Abraham that He will give him and his descendants a specific land. Not long after God promised this to Abraham, He told him that he and his descendants would have this land forever (Gen. 13:15). God carefully spelled out the precise boundary limits of this land (Gen. 15:18-21). In Genesis, God gives birth to Israel as a nation and promises her a very specific land.

In **Exodus**, God delivered His people from the oppression of the Egyptians and started leading them to this Promised Land. Part of His leading included giving them a series of governmental laws for social life and sacred worship. Those laws show up in Exodus and Leviticus.

In **Numbers**, we have a description of Israel moving and surviving in the wilderness on her way to this Promised Land. In Deuteronomy, Israel is giving final instructions for the taking of the land which is now in full view.

Joshua is the book that actually takes Israel into the Promised Land as a nation for the first time. Joshua is the climax to the progressive history of Israel discussed in the first five books of the Bible. Joshua features the conquest of the land and the commencement of wonderful experiences and blessings of God.

However, one thing we learn from Joshua is that Israel did not possess the total dimensions of land promised to her. This book foreshadows the great future for Israel. Even though there was one time in history when she possessed much of the land, she has never possessed all of the land; but she will in the future.

One of the great statements in Joshua comes about half-way through the book: Joshua 11:23, “So Joshua took the whole land...thus the land had rest from war.” God had brought to pass what He promised in the early chapters of Genesis. God is always faithful to Himself and His Word.

**QUESTION #6** – How does the book of Joshua unfold?

There is a very simple, fourfold outline of the book of Joshua that helps understanding:

- 1) Israel enters into the Promised Land. **Joshua 1-5 = The invasion of the Land.**
- 2) Israel fights for and conquers the Promised Land. **Joshua 6-12 = The conquest of the Land.**
  - A. Israel conquers the central part of the Promised Land. Josh. 6-9
  - B. Israel conquers the southern part of the Promised Land. Josh. 10
  - C. Israel conquers the northern part of the Promised Land. Josh. 11
- 3) Israel possesses and divides the Promised Land. **Joshua 13-21 = The division of the Land.**
- 4) Israel lives in the Promised Land. **Joshua 22-24 = The Blessings in the Land.**

**QUESTION #7** – What have been the main attacks against the book of Joshua?

Joshua has been attacked by liberals and skeptics for two reasons, both of which begin with a word that begins with the letter “M”: **1) The Moral Attack; 2) The Miracle attack.**

**Attack #1** - The Moral Attack.

The moral attack could be summed up this way—we attack the book of Joshua because no God could be cruel enough to sanction a massacre of an unoffending population like the Canaanites, which would include aged men, weak women and harmless children (Josh. 6:16, 21). How could a God of love and mercy demand that these nations living in this land be wiped out? If Joshua is true, God not only sanctioned this, but He helped bring it to pass.

To this moral argument/attack we may present four responses:

**(Response #1)** - The Canaanites were not innocent people. They were vile, immoral idolaters who, according to Leviticus 18-22, were totally given over to the most abominable practices known to man. God was gracious with these Canaanites for over 400 years until their iniquity was full (Gen. 15:16). These were vile people who committed vile offenses against God and humanity.

**(Response #2)** - The Canaanites knew that God was for Israel, and if they had been willing to yield to the will of God, they could have shared in her blessings (i.e. Josh. 2:9-14; 5:1).

The vast majority of these people hated God and hated the Israelites and would not give them their Promised Land.

**(Response #3)** - God is a God of war (Ex. 15:3). People want only a God of love and grace, but they do not want to hear that God is a God of war and He does execute. Truth is God does this every day. He gives life and takes life. Just because someone doesn't like this about God does not change the fact that He is God and this is the way He is. God is love, but He is also Holy. He is not some mambe-pambe, take it on the chin pacifist. God is a righteous warrior who fights and wins.

**(Response #4)** - God did demonstrate grace in not destroying all of the Canaanites at once. God annihilated them little by little, but they still would not repent. His grace was even seen in that.

Most people ask why would God do this or that? The better question is why would God put up with this or that?

### **Attack #2** - The Miracle Attack.

Many liberals and skeptics have attacked the book of Joshua because of the amazing miracles which show up in the book. There is no doubt that there are some incredible miracles in Joshua. The Jordan is parted (3:16). The wall surrounding Jericho falls down (6:20). The sun and the moon stood still (10:12-14). Some attack the book for this.

**(Response #1)** - God needed to do the miraculous to demonstrate His Word was being fulfilled and His nation Israel was finally about to settle in her Promised Land. It had been over 400 years since God parted the sea as Israel left Egypt and these miracles establish for Israel that God's power was with her (Josh. 5:1)

**(Response #2)** - Archeology has made at least one major discovery which proves the accuracy of one of the major miracles—the wall surrounding Jericho. The most famous archeologist pertaining to the book of Joshua was a man named John Garstang. In the late 1800's, Dr. Garstang, who was prompted by many archeological possibilities based on what he read in the Bible, went to dig in the Promised Land and he discovered the entire ancient city of Jericho. One of the most dramatic discoveries was that the walls surrounding Jericho had fallen outward. In order for a wall to fall down flat, it is the only way it could have fallen. The amazing discovery proved the accuracy of Joshua 6:20 right to the very word (*Joshua Judges*, Kregel).

**(Response #3)** - God is a God of miracles whether or not someone believes it. In fact, it was disbelief of the power of God that ultimately led to the destruction of the Canaanites. This will eventually be the outcome for modern day skeptics and scoffers. God reveals Himself to be a powerful God who at times does do the miraculous. To reject that God is a God of miracles, is to reject what God has revealed about Himself.

**QUESTION #8** – What is the purpose of Joshua?

Arthur Pink said without Joshua the preceding five books are incomprehensible and the succeeding O.T. books are unexplainable (*Gleanings In Joshua*, p. 11).

When Joshua was placed in Scripture, the events had already occurred. God wanted to keep the record and the memories alive of these events so it would affect the present and the future.

The primary purpose of the book of Joshua is to give a historical account of the fulfillment of God's promise to Israel in taking her into her Promised Land and removing all obstacles so she could enter and live in her Promised Land so that all who read and study would realize that God does precisely what He promises to do for Israel, and nothing can or will stop Him or His people.

**The purpose of this book is to motivate God's people to believe God's Word and become courageous good soldiers who fight a good war, so they could experience great victories and blessings.**

Joshua shows God's people that all of the wonderful promises of God will eventually be precisely and miraculously fulfilled. Obstacles do not stop God. Powerful evil forces do not stop God. God takes His people to the fulfillment of everything He has promised and we need to be good soldiers for Him.

As we study Joshua, we realize that great victory is possible. God will always fulfill His promises. We need to believe this and courageously live our lives defending this.