

The Book of Joshua



Introduction

The first five books of the Bible trace the creation and development of the Israelite nation. In them, God makes constant reference to his promise to give the Jews the land of Canaan. The sixth book, Joshua, records the fulfillment of that promise. Approximately 470 years after God made his initial promise to Abraham, his descendants were finally ready to seize the promised land under the leadership of Joshua. Although the natives of the land were more numerous and technologically superior to the Israelites, the Jews had God. And in keeping with the rest of the scriptures, this book is primarily about God. May he bless our efforts to learn how he works his eternal purposes through the lives of his people.

- I. Outline of Book (Taken from the ESV Study Bible)
 - A. Crossing into the Land (1.1-5.15)
 1. Joshua's charge (1.1-18)
 2. Joshua, the spies, and Rahab (2.1-24)
 3. Crossing the Jordan (3.1-4.24)
 4. Ritual renewal and divine encounter (5.1-15)
 - B. Taking the Land (6.1-12.24)
 1. Jericho's fall: firstfruits of war (6.1-27)
 2. Israel's failure: Achan's sin; corporate guilt (7.1-26)
 3. Israel's renewal: Ai's defeat (8.1-35)
 4. Defense of Gibeon, conquest of the south (10.1-43)
 5. Conquest of the north and a list of defeated kings (11.1-12.24)
 - C. Dividing the Land (13.1-21.45)
 1. It's yours, now take it! (13.1-33)
 2. Western territories (14.1-19.51)
 3. A land of justice and worship (20.1-21.45)
 - D. Serving the Lord in the Land (22.1-24.33)
 1. One nation, under God (22.1-34)
 2. Joshua's charge to Israel's leaders (23.1-16)
 3. Covenant renewal at Shechem (24.1-33)

II. Key Themes (Taken from the ESV Study Bible)

- A. The Lord's abiding presence as the key to strength and courage (e.g., 1:5, 9).
- B. The centrality of the Lord's instructions for succeeding in one's mission and acting with insight; land and rest as divine gifts (1:7-8).
- C. The ability of the Lord to save the "outsider" (Rahab), and the danger of the "insider" falling away (Achan; see chs. 2 and 7).
- D. The Lord as divine Warrior and the reality of judgment when iniquity is full (e.g., 10:42; 11:19-20).
- E. The danger of presumption and failure to inquire of the Lord (e.g., 9:14).
- F. The Lord as protector of the covenant (e.g., 10:1-15, esp. v. 11).
- G. The unity of the people of God (18:1-10; 22:34).
- H. The sovereignty of God in giving his people place and rest (1:13; 11:23; 21:43-45).
- I. The faithfulness of God in fulfilling all his good promises (1:2; 21:43-45).
- J. The necessity of removing false gods and worshiping God alone (ch. 24).

III. In your own words, how would you summarize the main point of this book?

IV. What is the approximate date of this book?

V. What do you know about Joshua from the OT?

- A. Read Exodus 17:8-14, 24:13, 33:7-11; Numbers 11:24-30, 13:1-16, 14:6-9
 - 1. From these passages, what can we learn about Joshua's character and personality?
 - 2. How much experience did Joshua have in leading battles?
 - 3. During the days of Moses, what were Joshua's jobs?
 - 4. Which Israelite tribe was he from?
 - 5. What does his name mean in Hebrew? What was his other name?

- VI. Imagine that you're an Israelite living in this time period. Moses dies and Joshua becomes the next leader and begins to lead your nation into the promised land after wandering in the wilderness for 40 years. What thoughts and emotions would you have about your life situation?

Schedule of Classes

Date of Class	Material to Cover
6/28/17	Introduction to Book
7/5/17	Chapter 1: Joshua's Commissioned
7/12/17	Chapter 2: Rahab & Spies
7/19/17	Chapters 3 & 4: The Jordan Crossing
7/26/17	Chapters 5 & 6: The Destruction of Jericho
8/2/17	Chapters 7 & 8: Ai, Achan, and Covenant Renewal
8/9/17	Chapter 9: The Gibeonite Deception
8/16/17	Chapters 10-11: Conquest of Canaanite Coalitions
8/23/17	Chapters 12-13: Defeated Kings and Tribal Inheritances
8/30/17	Chapters 14-15: Caleb and Judah's Allotment
9/6/17	Chapters 16-21: Dividing the Land Amongst the Rest
9/13/17	Chapter 22: The (Almost) Israelite Civil War
9/20/17	Chapters 23-24: Joshua's Final Exhortations

Chapter 1: Joshua's Commissioned

1. What were the specific promises that God made to Joshua?

1. Joshua is instructed by God three times to be strong and courageous (1.6, 7, 9). He is also encouraged by the people in the same way (1.18). Where did the strength/courage come from?

2. How does Joshua 1.1-9 serve as a table of contents for the rest of the book?

3. When Joshua assumes command, he gives a series of instructions, some to the officers of the people and some to the Gadites, Ruebenites, and the half tribe of Manasseh.
 - a. What did he instruct those tribes to do and why?

 - b. Approximately how long would it take the Israelites to break the backbone of the Canaanite resistance and bring the land "rest from war"? (Joshua 14.7, 10, 15)

4. What applications can we draw from this text?

Chapter 2: Rahab & Spies

1. Consider the work of the two spies.
 - a. What was their mission?

 - b. How did this spying excursion differ from the 12 spies incident?

 - c. What news did they return home with?

2. What was the Canaanite perception of the Israelites, their mission, and God? (2.9-12, 9.24)

3. Let's mine the scriptures for what we know about Rahab the harlot.
 - a. From Joshua 2, what are the foremost things on her mind? What does she care about?

 - b. What became of her after Jericho fell?

 - c. What points are made in the NT make about her? (Matt. 1.5, Heb. 11.31, Js. 2.25)

4. When approached by messengers of the King of Jericho, Rahab clearly lies about the spies. Do we have other Biblical examples of God-fearing people telling lies in pursuit of God? Does the text address the question of whether her lie was morally justified in God's eyes?

5. What applications can we draw from this text?

Chapters 3 & 4: The Jordan Crossing

1. Consult some Biblical resources to discover what the Jordan river would have been like. For example, how deep is it? How wide? What does the text say about the condition of the river when it was crossed?
2. In the text, why does God choose to perform the miracle of parting the Jordan?
3. How would the Israelites have “consecrated” themselves (Ex. 19.10-15)? Why was consecration required?
4. Summarize the account of the crossing.
5. Where is “Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan” and how far away was it from where the Israelites were located?
6. 3.17 is the first time that the Israelites are referred to as a “nation,” apart from a few texts that anticipate their nationhood (Genesis 12.2, Ex. 19.6). During their time in Egypt and in the wilderness, they were called a “people.” Explain the significance of this change.
7. What was the purpose of the 12 stones that were set up? Can you think of other monuments that were set up around Israel?
8. What applications can we draw from the text?

Chapters 5 & 6: The Destruction of Jericho

1. After crossing the river, it is significant to note that the Israelites did not immediately attack Jericho. Which two large-scale events happened first and why?
2. It is interesting that God chose to send the commander of His angelic army to Joshua instead of other angels. What are possible reasons for this? Why did Joshua take off his sandals?
3. Summarize the battle plan God gave to Joshua.
4. How did the battle plan and the taking of Jericho glorify God?
5. God commanded that that the people could not to take any booty from Jericho and that all the gold, silver, iron, and bronze would go to the treasury of Lord. This was the only city in the book of Joshua that received this treatment. Why? (Exodus 13.2, 34.26)
6. In both the crossing of the Jordan and in the conquering of Jericho, the ark of the covenant played a key role. Why? How did future generations of Israelites come to view the ark, perhaps based upon stories like these? (1 Samuel 4.3).
7. Joshua pronounced a curse on whomever rebuilt the city. What were the specific consequences of the curse? Did the curse ever take effect?
8. What applications can we draw from the text?

Chapters 7 & 8: Ai, Achan, and Covenant Renewal

1. What does the name “Ai” mean? Where is it located on a map of ancient Israel? How far was it from Jericho? According to the Bible, what was the population of the city?
2. Why do you suppose God directed Israel to go through an elaborate process in order to find the perpetrator? Couldn't God have simply revealed to Joshua that Achan was the problem?
3. How does the divinely-inspired Ai plan differ from what the Israelites initially tried to do?
4. What is the significance of Joshua hanging the King of Ai (as well as other kings later on - 10.26) on a tree until evening?
5. With the creation of the stones written with the law at Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerazim (Deuteronomy 11.29-30, 27.1-14), how many stone monuments were in the land that commemorated either sin or God's deliverance?
 - a. When Joshua read to the people, who heard him?
 - b. What passage did Joshua read?
 - c. How long does it take to read that part of the Bible?
6. What applications can we draw from this text?

Chapter 9: The Gibeonite Deception

1. From 9.7 and 11.19, we learn that the inhabitants of Gibeon were “Hivites.” Interestingly, this name appears 25 times in the Bible though not in texts outside the Bible. From the following Biblical passages, what do we learn about the Hivite people and their place in God’s plan? Genesis 10.17, 34.2, 36.2? Ex. 23.23, 28; Deut. 7.1.
2. In 9.14, the author of the book offers some rare commentary about why Israel made such a foolish decision. Can you think of ways that we might not “ask counsel from the Lord” and suffer as a result?
3. Why did the Gibeonites put on this elaborate ruse? Once the Israelites discovered the lie, what were the specific consequences for the Canaanites?
4. In Deuteronomy 20.10-18, the Israelites were specifically forbidden from making peace agreements with the Canaanite nations, yet they unknowingly did. Apparently there were provisions in the law for rash vows that could be invalidated or repented of (Numbers 30, Leviticus 5.4-6). Why did the Israelites choose to keep their sinful, rash vow?
5. Does the Bible provide any clues about what became of the Gibeonites later on in Israelite history? Please consider 1 Chronicles 9.2; Ezra 2.43, 8.20; Nehemiah 7.60, 11.3.
6. What other applications can we draw from this text?

Chapters 10-11: Conquest of Canaanite Coalitions

1. What motivated Adoni-zedek and his fellow kings to strike Gibeon?
2. Explain the significance of God's words to Joshua: "I have given them into your hands" (10.8). How were the kings defeated?
3. What is the Book of Jasher? Is it a lost book of the Bible? If not, why not?
4. Why did Joshua order his men to put their feet on the necks of the defeated kings? Why did they hang the dead bodies of the kings on trees until evening?
5. 11.10 mentions that the city of Hazor was the head of many kingdoms. If you can, research Hazor and find out as much as you can about it.

6. In 11.20, the stubbornness and eventual destruction of the Canaanite nations was described as “the Lord’s doing... that they should receive no mercy but be destroyed...” How does this fit with God’s description of himself in Exodus 34.6, where he tells the Israelites that he is a “merciful and gracious” God?

7. Where did the surviving Anakim live? Do Anakim appear later in the Bible?

8. In 11.23, what does it mean that “Joshua took the whole land,” since we know from the rest of the book (e.g. 13.1-7) that all the Canaanite territory had not yet been conquered?

9. What applications can we draw out of this text?

Chapters 12-13: Defeated Kings and Tribal Inheritances

1. 12.1 marks a shift in the book. The first part of Joshua dealt with God being faithful to give the Israelites their land, the rest of the book deals with whether Israel would prove faithful in actually taking possession of it.
2. Why didn't God allow the Israelites to conquer all the land in Joshua's lifetime?
3. Chapter 12 gives us a list of defeated enemies by Moses and Joshua. Typically, ancient kings would record their conquests in a self-glorifying way - "I took such and such..." What do you notice about how this chapter is worded?
4. Make a list of the people still left to be driven out. Which ones do we hear about later? Who were the Avvim (Deut. 2.23)?
5. What were the spiritual implications of 13.13, 15.63, etc.? In other words, why did the Israelites fail to drive out these people and what happened as a consequence to their moral characters?
6. Balaam, the son of Beor is mentioned in 13.22. Why?
7. What applications can we draw out of this text?

Chapters 14-15: Caleb and Judah's Allotment

1. Summarize what Caleb said to Joshua.
2. Why is Caleb's story given such prominence in the text?
3. The territory that Caleb wanted for his inheritance (Hebron) was a very important place for the Israelites. Why?
4. Caleb purposely chose to conquer the territory occupied by the Anakim, despite being 85 years old.
5. What do we know about Othniel, the man who married Achsah (see Judges 3.7-11)?
6. In 15.13-19, we're given a short story of how the family of Caleb conquered and settled their land in Judah. Interestingly, this same story is also repeated in the book of Judges (Judges 1.11-15). What is the significance of this story? What can we learn from it?
7. 15.63 tells us that the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, were not driven out. When would they be eventually driven out?
8. What applications can we draw out of this text?

Chapters 16-21: Dividing the Land Amongst the Rest

1. What problems do Ephraim, Manasseh, and Dan have in the text (16.10, 17.13, 19.47)?
2. What are we told about Zelophehad's daughters and why (17.3-6)?
3. How does Joshua help the people of Joseph to solve their issue (17.14-18)?
4. What was Joshua's message to the seven tribes who remained (18.2-10)?
5. What was the purpose of a city of refuge? Which cities were designated this way?
6. What kind of land did the tribe of Levi obtain?
7. What do we learn about God in 21.43-45?
8. What applications can we draw from this text?

Chapter 22: The (Almost) Israelite Civil War

1. When the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and (eastern) Manasseh were allowed to go home, what did they build and why did they build it?
2. Why did the trans-jordan tribes meet such resistance? What were the objections and the arguments that other tribes brought to them?
3. Notice that Phinehas leads the delegation of Israelites that visit the trans-jordan tribes? What do we know about Phinehas from other scriptures?
4. It is interesting that Israel quickly gathered together fight the trans-jordan tribes once they heard of the building project, yet we read in previous chapters that many of the tribes struggled to fight the Canaanites and take possession of their own land. What was the difference?
5. How did the story resolve? What were the end results?
6. What applications can we draw from this text?

Chapters 23-24: Joshua's Final Exhortations

1. In chapter 23, Joshua summoned the leaders of Israel and spoke to them before he called the entire nation together. Summarize the main things he told the leaders to do. What kinds of character attributes were they commanded to have?
2. What Israelite actions would cause God to stop driving out the Canaanite nations? When would this eventually occur (Judges 2.3, 21)?
3. In Joshua's address to the nation (chapter 24), why do you suppose he began by pointing out that their fathers who lived beyond the Euphrates "served other gods"?
4. In chapter 24, Joshua briefly summarizes the history of the nation in his speech to the people. In the text, what do those stories have in common?
5. After the Israelites agreed to serve God, why would Joshua say, "you are not able to serve the Lord?" Look especially at 24.14, 23.

6. Joshua said that he (and his house) would choose to serve the Lord. What can fathers learn from this passage to help them lead their families to choose God?

7. After Joshua renewed the covenant with the people, he placed a large stone under a terebinth tree there in Shechem. What other major event happened under a terebinth tree at Shechem (Genesis 35.4)?

8. What applications can we draw out of this text?