

# *Introduction to the Book of Joshua*

## *The book of Joshua:*

First of the collection that the Jewish Bible calls the “Former Prophets”

The Hebrew canon is divided differently from that of the *Septuagint* (the latter arrangement is followed by English Bibles). There are three divisions: 1. **Torah** (law), 2. **Nebi'im** (prophets), and 3. **Kethubim** (writings). The *Prophets* divide into two groups: the **Former Prophets** (Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings) and the **Latter Prophets** (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and “The Twelve” [our “minor prophets”])

The theme of the book is the conquest and settlement of Canaan, in fulfillment of God’s promises made to Israel’s ancestors (21:43-45).

## *Authorship:*

Jewish tradition ascribes to Joshua (see 24:26), and he may have been its substantial author, though it has not necessarily come down to us without interpolations or editorial input from others. Some parts describe events after his death. Traditionally, his death (24:29-32) was written by Eleazer, and the death of Eleazer (24:33) was written by Phineas.

“The history of the world is but the biography of great men” —Thomas Carlyle

It was written by a contemporary writer, since Rahab was still living at the time (6:25)

## *Joshua, the man:*

Known by various names in scripture: Oshea (Num.13:8, 16); Moses gave him the longer name Jehoshua (Num.13:16); shortened to Hoshea (Deut.32:44); in Greek, Jesus (Heb.4:8)

First seen as military commander against Amalekites (Ex.17:8-14);

Servant of Moses: Ex.24:13 (compare Elijah and Elisha)

Ephraimite Prince and Spy (Numbers 13:8)

Supported Moses against ten rebellious spies (Numbers 14:6, 10)

Successor to Moses (Numbers 27:18-23; Deut.31:7-8)

## *The historical setting:*

Date of entering Canaan— Approximately 1452/51 BC

Judah fell to Babylon in 586 BC. This was 390 years after the monarchy divided under Rehoboam (Ezek.4:4-5, confirmed by adding up the lengths of the reigns of the Judean kings). This places the division of the monarchy in 975 BC. The 40-year reign of Solomon preceded that, making Solomon’s reign begin in 1015 BC. The temple, built in the third year of Solomon’s reign (1012 BC) was 480 years after the exodus (1 Kings 6:1), placing the exodus about 1492/91. Joshua took charge 40 years later, or about 1452/51.

Probably written at least 25 years after the initial invasion.

Josephus said Joshua was 85 when he assumed leadership. He died at 110 (24:29). Thus the time covered = about 25 years

Second generation after the exodus. Moses has just died and left Joshua in command

As a spy had said that God could help Israel conquer. Now he must put his money where his mouth is!

## *Outline of the book:*

I. Entering the Land (chapters 1-5)

II. Conquering the Land (chapters 6-12)

III. Division of the Land (chapters 13-22)  
IV. Joshua's Farewell Addresses (Chapters 23-24)

***Is this Jihad?***

- A. Not conversion by the sword, but divine judgment upon the wicked (Deut.9:4-5 / Gen.15:16)
- B. God is not bloodthirsty (Exodus 34:6-7 / Ezek.33:11)
- C. Ethics of genocide?
  - 1. God's prerogatives (Jeremiah 18:1-6)
  - 2. Taking God's side (Psalm 139:19-22)
  - 3. If the children were spared, but left as orphans, who would adopt them?
  - 4. Eternal vs. temporal fates. Would they be better off growing up pagans, or dying innocent? (Isa.7:16 / 57:1-2)
- D. Holy war as a "type" of spiritual warfare (1 Cor.10:6, 11 / 2 Cor.10:4-5)

***God and War:***

War as divine judgment

Non-parallels between biblical wars and modern wars

- There is no promised land, or political nation who are "God's people"
- Whom does God wish to judge?
- Who is taking orders from God?
- Who are we identified with— Christ's kingdom, or domicile nations?

***Lessons of the book:***

Joshua, a type of Christ—successor to Moses (the Law)

Canaan= "rest" (Deut.3:20; 12:9; 25:19 / Josh.1:13; 23:1/ Heb.3:7—4:11)

Canaan not primarily a type of heaven

- It is a place of conflict and progressive conquest
- It is not an unconditionally secure venue
- Hebrews 4:3—"We who have believed *do* enter into that rest"

It is a type of "the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ."

C. H. Spurgeon says: "There is a point of grace as much above the ordinary Christian as the ordinary Christian is above the world."

"Both Scripture and the experience of many of Christ's people seem to confirm that there is a work of Divine grace in the believer, quite distinct from that which we commonly call conversion, and usually, though not necessarily, subsequent to it, in which the soul is brought into an experience of inwrought holiness and fellowship with God never known by conversion alone."  
—J. Sidlow Baxter, *Explore the Book*, vol.1, p.241

Baxter describes this experience as follows: "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" makes gloriously free from "the law of sin and death" (Rom. viii. 2). There is complete renewal in the very "spirit of the mind" (Eph. iv. 23). There is effected such a love-blend of the believer's life and will with the life and will of Christ that, instead of being egocentric, the believer becomes Christocentric. Self-consciousness is sublimated in Christ-consciousness, so that the experience now is, I live, yet not I; Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 20); and "To me to live is Christ" (Phil. i. 21). The personality becomes monopolized and suffused by Holy Spirit (Eph. v. 18). Perfect love fills the heart and casts out fear (I John iv. 18)."

Spiritually, as well as physically, Canaan is a place of:

- (1) Bounty (Ex.3:8/ Lev.26:4-5);
- (2) Rest (Lev.26:6/ Deut.6:10-11); and
- (3) Triumph (Lev.26:7-8/ Deut.7:1)

Parallels between Joshua and Ephesians: apprehending the *inheritance* (corresponding to references to the *heavenlies* in Eph. 1:3; 1:20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12)

- 1. Each represents the inheritance of God's people
- 2. Each is acquired by a leader chosen by God

3. Each is a gift of grace acquired by faith
4. Each is a scene of battle and victory

## **CHAPTER 1 Joshua's Charge and Commission**

- v.4 Euphrates (2 Sam.8:3; 1 Kings 4:21)
- v.5 "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." Quoted in Hebrews 13:5
- v.6, 7, 9 "Be strong and courageous"
- v.11 Three days till Jordan crossing
- v.15 "Rest" (11:23; 21:44; 22:4; 23:1)

## **CHAPTER 2 Rahab protects the spies**

Jericho location was 6 miles from Jordan, in the central region between the Southern and Northern regions of Canaan. For Israel to gain control of this central region would create a buffer zone, rendering it impossible for the northern and southern kings to gather together in a coalition against Israel.

Of all the cities in the world, Jericho is the lowest in elevation (2500 feet below sea level), and the oldest known inhabited city (allegedly dating back to 9,000 BC). Archaeologists have found the remains of 34 successive walls built around the city throughout history.

Rahab's profession: Harlot (Heb. *Zanah*) or "Innkeeper" (Josephus) ?

Rahab's faith (Heb.11:31)

Rahab's "works" (James 2:25)

Rahab's lie

Rahab's house - Two walls 15 feet apart surrounded the city. Her house must have straddled these walls. (v.15)

## **CHAPTERS 3 Crossing Jordan**

- v. 15 At floodtide, the Jordan was sometimes as much as a mile wide.
- v. 16 Adam beside Zarethan was a location 18 miles north of Jericho
  - In 1927 the Jordan's flow was halted for 21 hours by the collapse of an overhanging cliff upstream
  - Similar blockages occurred in 1546, 1834 and 1906

Whether this stoppage was caused by some such mudslide or not, the timing was providential (see 3:13; 4:18)

## **CHAPTER 4 Memorial Stones**

- v.9 Two sets of stones?
- vv. 19f Beachhead at Gilgal, about 5 miles from Jordan

Typology: crossing Jordan = death? Spiritual breakthrough to spiritual "rest"? A second baptism?

## **CHAPTER 5 Circumcision and Passover**

v.1 The miraculous crossing served as psychological warfare against Amorite and Canaanite kings.

v.3 *Gibeath Haaraloth* "The Hill of the Foreskins"

v. 5 Lengthy neglect of circumcision. This was their parents' sin, not theirs.

v. 8 Circumcision of all males placed Israel in a position vulnerable to attack (cf., Gen.34:25)

Four days later (4:19; 5:10) Passover was celebrated

v.12 End of Manna

vv.13-15 Captain of the Lord's host

## **CHAPTER 6 Jericho**

v.4 Seven priests with seven shofars.

v.13 Continuous sounding of shofars during marches

v.15 Marching around the city seven times would take about three hours.

Archaeology has established that, in Joshua's time, 1) Jericho's walls collapsed due to some calamity comparable to an earthquake; 2) Jericho was burned with fire, though not plundered; 3) Its siege had not been a long one, since there were abundant supplies of food in the city.

vv.22-25 Rahab spared and still living at time of writing. She later married a Judean named Salmon and was in Christ's ancestry (Matt.1:5)

v. 26 Joshua's curse on the rebuilders of Jericho (and its fulfillment, 1 Kings 16:34)

In later history, Marc Antony gave Jericho as a gift to Cleopatra. About 30 years prior to the birth of Jesus, Cleopatra leased it to Herod, who built his winter palace there. Jericho was the place where the Good Samaritan, in the parable, is said to have lodged the man who had fallen among thieves (Luke 10:30ff). Jesus met Zacchaeus in that city, and healed two blind men outside its gates (Luke 18:35-19:10).

During the Byzantine Era, Jericho was a Christian city, but later came under Islamic control.

Jericho did not become prototype for future strategy

## **CHAPTER 7 Achan's Sin and Defeat at Ai**

Ai is about 14 miles northwest of Jericho.

v.1 Israel guilty for one man's misconduct - vv.11

vv.3-4 There is no mention of Joshua's leadership, nor of the people consulting the Lord. They underestimated the size of the city, which lost 12,000 inhabitants in the second campaign (8:25)

v.5 These 36 casualties are the only losses of Israelite troops mentioned in Joshua.

v.13 While accursed thing is there, God's people can't stand against their enemies

vv.16-18 The process of discovery—divine, but drawn-out

Silver, Gold, Clothing—ironically, had Achan been obedient, he would have received all these things and more, legitimately (see 22:8). Consider Jesus' words in Matt.16:24-26 and 19:29. Achan sought to gain the world, but lost his soul.

v.24 Did Achan's family share his fate?

v.26 Valley of Achor

## **CHAPTER 8 Conquest of Ai (and, probably, Bethel)**

vv.3-13 Ambush strategy

v.3 30,000 behind the city

v.12 5,000 on the west of the city

v.13 Main army north of the city

v.17 Bethel (1.5 miles away) also joined with Ai (Bethel's king is later listed among the vanquished - 12:16)

v. 26 Joshua's holding out the javelin resembles Moses' hands in the air

v.27 This time they keep the booty

v.30ff Covenant renewal at Ebal (curses) and Gerizim (blessings) of Deut.27

v.31 The simple altar (Deut.37:5-6)

v.32 The Ten Commandments on plaster-coated stone (Deut.37:2-3)

v.34 The whole law read aloud (Deut.31:10-13)

v.35 Israel and foreigners (Ex.12:38)

## **CHAPTER 9 Gibeonite Covenant**

v.1-2 A general coalition of Canaanites formed to resist Joshua

vv.3ff Gibeonites, a great city of mighty men (10:2), chose to side with Joshua

Four Gibeonite cities were located in Israel's direct line of advance, and would soon have been attacked. In fact, Israel arrived there within 3 days (vv.16-17). From Gilgal, it was 21 miles, and could be traveled overnight (10:9).

v.3-6 They deceived Joshua (Israel was not allowed to make covenants with Canaanites-Ex.23:32/Deut.7:2)

v.14 Israel did not ask counsel from the Lord

v.15 A covenant and an oath were made

v.19 A covenant cannot be broken (Psalm 15:4)

v.24 The Gibeonites (like Rahab) had faith in Yahweh's promises

This was "of the Lord," in that they were the only cities whose hearts God did not harden (11:19-20; cf. Judges 14:4)

Saul violated this covenant, and Israel suffered for it (2 Sam.21:1-9).

The tabernacle was in Gibeon, in Solomon's day, and God made His promise to Solomon there (2 Chron.1:3).

## **CHAPTER 10 Conquest of the Southern Confederacy**

v.4 Gibeonites persecuted for their faith in Yahweh

v.5 Five kings of the southern region attacked Gibeon for what they regarded as disloyalty

It would have been convenient for Israel simply to let Gibeon be wiped out by the other Canaanites

v.8 Joshua risked his troops to keep this covenant, but God had told him he would conquer

v.11 Hail killed more of the retreating Canaanites than did Israel's swords

v.13 The sun stood still (speaking to the sun and moon was speaking "to the Lord"—v.12)  
Such a long day is mentioned in traditions of China, Egypt and India

v.13 *Book of Jashur* (2 Samuel 1:18) 1751 a fraudulent book claiming to be this book was published

vv.28ff Joshua followed-up this victory with further conquests throughout Southern Palestine

Though the king of Jerusalem was killed in these battles, Jerusalem was not conquered at this time (15:63)

## **CHAPTER 11 Conquest of the Northern Confederacy**

v.1, 10 The Hazor Confederacy gathered against Joshua

Hazor was a major city in the North, having a population of about 40,000 and an area 10 times larger than Jerusalem

Israel had to march about five days to meet the enemy (did not wait to be attacked)

v.6, 9 Hamstringing the horses, rather than killing them or appropriating them for military use

v.11, 13 Hazor was burned with fire, but not the other cities (archaeology confirms this)

v.18 A long campaign: seven years (see on Caleb's age: 14:7, 10)

v.20 God hardened the hearts of the Canaanites

v.21-22 Anakim—an Egyptian papyrus from 13<sup>th</sup> cent. BC (*Anastasi I*) mentions some inhabitants of Canaan who were 9 feet tall (see Num.13:28, 32-33). All defeated by Joshua, except those who dwelt in Philistine cities.

After defeating coalition armies, Israel mopped up by conquering individual cities.

v.23 Entire land was subdued (see 21:43-45) but keeping it was conditional (23:16; Lev.18:24-29; 25:23; Deut.28:21, 63)

## **CHAPTER 12 List of 33 Defeated Kings**

Two east of Jordan, 31 west of Jordan

## **CHAPTER 13 Boundaries of the Land**

v.1 There remained cities and regions yet to be completely subdued

v. 6 Land divided “by lot” (cf., 14:2; 19:51)

## **CHAPTER 14 Caleb’s Possession**

This story is repeated in Judges 1:11-15, and mentions Caleb driving 3 sons of Anak out of Hebron (v.20)

v.6 Caleb approaches Joshua

v.12 Following up on the original report given 45 years earlier

## **CHAPTER 15 Judah’s Possession, Caleb’s Conquest**

Judah received the largest portion—nearly 1/3 of the land—but not all was usable.

vv.21-32 Names of 36 towns are given. The total is given as 29 (v.32), because 7 were given to Simeon.

## **CHAPTER 16 – 17 Ephraim and Manasseh**

## **CHAPTER 18 – 19 Tent of Meeting and Seven Remaining Tribes**

v.1 Tabernacle set up at Shiloh

## **CHAPTER 20 Cities of Refuge**

Three on each side of Jordan (Deut.4:41-43)

Situated so that no Israelite would have to travel more than 50 miles to one of them.

## **CHAPTER 21 Levitical Cities**

48 cities, situated so that no Israelite would live more than 10 miles from one of them.

## **CHAPTER 22 The Controversial Altar**

## **CHAPTER 23 Joshua’s Farewell Address to the Leaders**

## **CHAPTER 24 Joshua Addresses the People; Death of Joshua and Eleazar**