

Old Testament Survey
Lesson 7 – Joshua
Valley Bible Church Adult Sunday School
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Introduction

When we turn to the Book of Joshua, we have left the first block of Old Testament books, the Pentateuch, and we move into the second block consisting of books of history. In Genesis God brings about the birth of Israel (Gen 12:2) and promises to give it the land of Canaan. In Exodus He delivers His people from oppression in Egypt, gives them the Law, and leads them to the Promised Land (they fail to enter). In Leviticus, He gives them a way to come to Him (the sacrifice offerings) and away to keep right with Him (the special events). In Numbers, Israel is organized and journeys across the desert and up to the very gates of Canaan again. In Deuteronomy, they make final preparation to enter the land with Moses being careful not to let them repeat their earlier mistakes. Who could ever fill the shoes of Moses? (¹⁰Since that time no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, Deut 34:10). The book is named after the man God chose to do just that. Now Joshua will take Israel into the Promised Land.

¹Now it came about after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' servant, saying, ²"Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel. ³"Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses. Josh 1:1-3

The name Joshua is a highly significant one: in Hebrew, it is Yehoshua (The Lord's Salvation). Where did we first meet Joshua? He was born a slave in Egypt experiencing the oppression of Pharaoh. He was forty when he left Egypt with his people in the Exodus. He led Israel in battle against Amalek (Ex 17:9-14). He was a faithful servant of Moses who waited for him at Mt. Sinai (Ex 24:13; 32:17; 33:11). He was one of the twelve sent into the Promised Land as a spy (Num 13, 14; 26:56; 32:12). He was 80 years old when he received his commission from God (Num 27:15-23; Deut 31:7, 8; 34:9). Joshua lived to be 110 years old (Josh 24:29). Therefore, he was 80 years old when he took over for Moses and 40 at the Exodus. Joshua was a great man with many character traits for us to try to emulate. He was a man of:

1. Faith (Num 14): Joshua and Caleb saw the same problems facing the nation in Canaan as the others when they spied out the land. Humanly, the taking of the land was impossible (they were as grasshoppers), but they were men of faith. They were ready to **act** based on their **belief** that their Lord is the all powerful Lord based on their **confidence** that He can and will do what He says and keep His promises. Those are the **ABCs** of faith.
2. Courage (Josh 1): Joshua was given a special gift from God, courage. In 1:5-9, God personally speaks to Joshua and tells him three times, "Be strong and courageous." Why? Verse 5, "No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you." Joshua showed his courage repeatedly both by challenging the rebellious Israelites, and in confronting every enemy they faced.
3. Loyalty (Ex 33): God commanded the movement of the people by His presence in the form of the Shekina Glory cloud or fire. When they camped, He would talk to Moses in the tent of meeting "face to face." Joshua would always remain outside the tent just as he stayed at the foot of Mt. Sinai, ready to carry out any order Moses would bring from God.
4. Obedience (Josh 11): Joshua led the armies of God to victory destroying cities and their inhabitants just as God, through Moses had instructed. This could not have been a pleasant job, but he obeyed. In Josh 11:15 it relates, "he left nothing undone of all that the LORD had commanded Moses."

5. Commitment (Josh 24): In his farewell address to the people he had lead to victory, Joshua offers his final famous challenge. He tells them that God has been faithful always and now they needed to choose between the idols of surrounding nations or the true God.

¹⁴"Now, therefore, fear the LORD and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. ¹⁵"If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; **but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.**" Josh 24:14-15

Joshua was a great man, but he was not perfect. God, as always, allows us to see the weakness of even His best servants. He will misjudge people and situations, he will get in a hurry and move ahead of God, he will let the people get to him, but in his heart he was always God's obedient servant. If we could just take a small fraction of his character and emulate it in our daily lives, we would be men and women of God and unbelievable warriors for Christ.

Author of Joshua:

We cannot absolutely, positively identify the writer of the Book of Joshua, but we have some good hints:

1. The author was an eyewitness to the historical events given in minute detail and vivid description often using personal pronouns.
2. The book was written not long after the events occurred since the phrase "unto this day" occurs a number of times (i.e. "Rahab ... lived among the Israelites unto this day").
3. Joshua is specifically identified as the author of much of the book (i.e. the words of the covenant, the land survey of Canaan, his farewell address, etc.).
4. The bulk of the book was written by one person as proved by the unity of style, organization, and common word usage (confirmed by computer analysis).
5. The Talmud (ancient Jewish writings and commentary) state that Joshua wrote all but the concluding five verses, which were written by Phinehas, son of the High Priest Eleazar.

Purpose:

Joshua is a historical account of the conquest (Chapters 1-12) and division (Chapters 13-24) of the land of Canaan, the Promised Land. However, it is more than just a history book. It was used during the time of the judges to remind a sinning Israel of their covenant with Jehovah God when "everyone was doing what was right in their own eyes." It commands them to be faithful to their personal and national relationship to their Lord. The book can be divided into the Conquest and the Occupation of the land. It holds many great examples of God's faithfulness in keeping His promises to His followers. It also gives us great examples of what happens when a person gives Himself to God without reserve and obeys Him explicitly.

I. Claiming the Land (1-5)

The first five chapters illustrate what can happen when faith is exercised and tells us five activities that faith produce.

A. Faith Believes (1)

1. Faith believes God as He speaks through His word. Joshua was facing this great challenge and was obviously afraid. God told Him to be strong and courageous (three times – 1:6, 7, and 9) but He did not stop there. God told Joshua how he would have success (verse 8).
 - a) Know God's promises
 - b) Decide to be strong and courageous
 - c) Meditate on the Word day and night in order to be careful to do it
 - d) Way is prosperous and will have success

2. As they prepare and pack to move, they pledge to obey God. Joshua gives his officers orders to be ready to move in three days. The people (particularly the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh) pledge to obey God and Joshua regardless of what the command. They even pledge to put any disobedient persons to death.

B. Faith Counts (2)

1. Even though Joshua and his men trust in God, they will still follow proper military procedure. They still plan before they build, count the cost before they go to war. He wanted as much information as possible before acting.
2. The spies end up trapped in Jericho and only Rehab's nerve and quick thinking helped save them and allow their report to get back to Joshua.

Putting the debate on the morality of her acts aside, we know she had faith ("for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath." v11 cf Heb 11:31 and James 2:25) and was rewarded for her actions. Her life was spared, she married into one of the families of Judah and became, by grace, one of the ancestors of David and Jesus (She became the wife of Salmon and the mother of the Boaz—David's great-grandfather – Matt 1:5).

The spies eagerly return with a much different message than the first time 40 years before.

²³Then the two men returned and came down from the hill country and crossed over and came to Joshua the son of Nun, and they related to him all that had happened to them. ²⁴They said to Joshua, "Surely the LORD has given all the land into our hands; moreover, all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before us." Josh 2:23-24

C. Faith Acts (3)

1. Faith is never static. Faith is **action** based on **belief** that God will do what He promises and **confidence** He can do what He wants to do. (**The ABCs of Faith**)
2. In this case, the action is the crossing of the river Jordan. With the priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant into the river, a miracle happens resembling the first one out of Egypt, and the nation crosses over into the land toward Jericho.

D. Faith Increases (4)

1. When the nation crossed to Jordan, Joshua had twelve men (one from each tribe) bring twelve stones from the middle of the river to make an altar at Gilgal on the eastern border so that they would have an object lesson for their children illustrating the miracle crossing.
2. God also strengthens their faith in Joshua – he was “exalted in the sight of all Israel”. (4:14).

E. Faith Pays (5)

1. Another evidence of faith is willingness to do what God asks, even if it is not comfortable. The rite of circumcision, which had been neglected for years, was re-instituted. This was very difficult for the adult males but they obeyed.
2. Joshua also re-instituted the Passover celebration at Gilgal. They then eat of the produce of the land and the Manna ceases. Joshua met the captain of the host of the Lord. Here Joshua is reminded that the battle belongs to the Lord. In, "paying the price" by these deliberate acts of faith and obedience, the land was claimed and victory assured. Gilgal turns into the base camp for Israel (4:19; 10:6-9; 15; 43...).

II. Conquering the Land (6-11)

The conquering of the land show that God through Joshua is a master tactician. Here is an early example of the military strategy of divide and conquer. Joshua led his army into the heart of Canaan, driving a wedge and cutting the area into two parts making communication and re-supply difficult. This destroyed an effective coalition between the nations of the north and south. It was a masterpiece of strategy. We will take advantage of this and break the next section into three parts:

A. The Central Campaign (6-8)

1. Victory through Faith--Jericho (6)

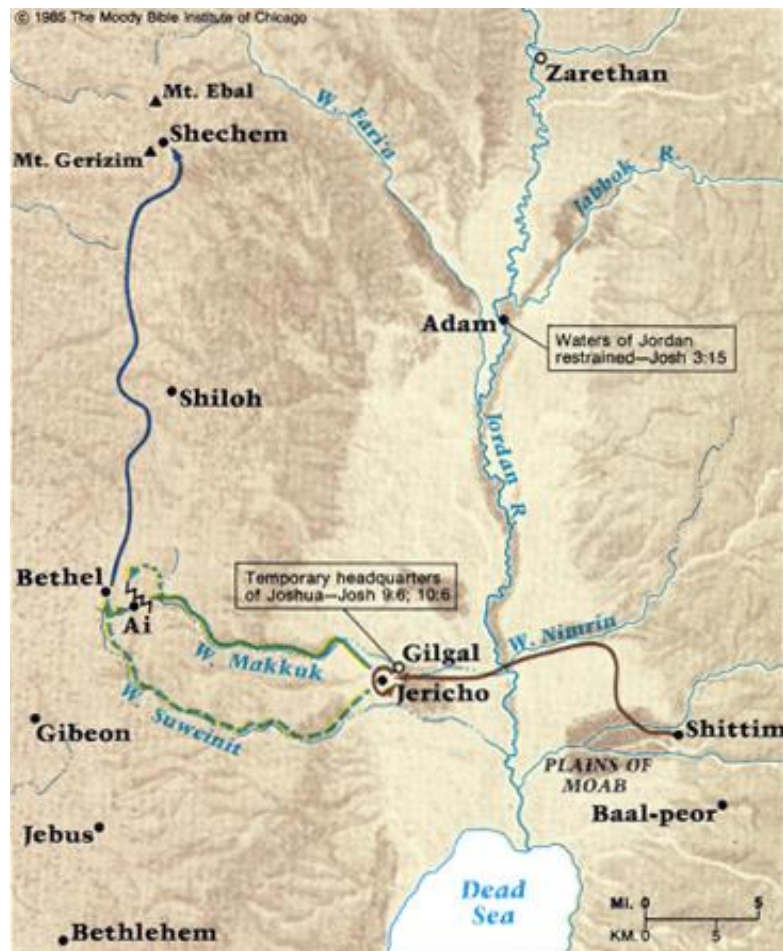
The commands for how Jericho is to be conquered are given and then carried out exactly. The walls fall and the city is conquered. Rahab and her family are spared as was promised. By complete obedience comes complete victory.

2. Defeat through Sin--Ai (7)

By self-confidence and unconfessed sin comes defeat. Achan sinned by being disobedient to the Lord to not take banned items from Jericho. Joshua did not wait on the Lord for instructions and sent a small force against Ai. Previous successes do not guarantee future successes. The Lord reveals Achan as the sinner. Joshua details a way in which God is glorified (Josh 7:19). Achan and all his family are stoned and burned.

3. Victory through purging of Sin and Restoration (8)

By confession, recommitment, and obedience comes victory again. The Lord delivers Ai into Israel's hands.



B. The Southern Campaign (9-10)

1. Alliance with Gibeon (9) (The Gibeonite deception)

After subduing Ai, Joshua made one of his serious mistakes. He made a deal with the Gibeonites, forgetting warnings in Deut 7:1-2 and instruction in Joshua 1:8. The Gibeonites fooled him because he failed to pray and rely on God (Josh 9:14). Joshua honored the pact he made with the Gibeonites and chose not to destroy them, but he did make them slaves.

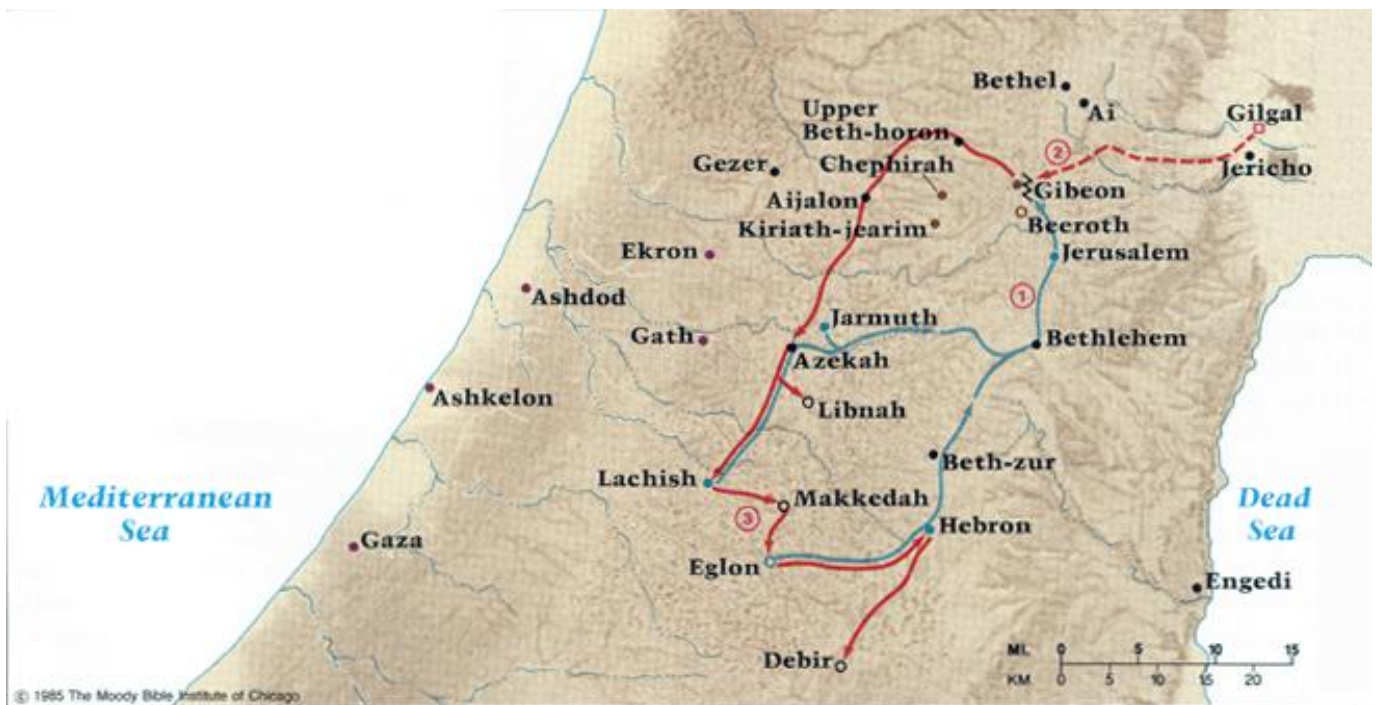
2. War Against the Five Kings (10:1-27)

Five nations led by Adoni-zedek, king of Jerusalem attacked Gibeon. Since Joshua was fooled into making the pact, he was bound to honor it when he received a call for help from them. Joshua brought his army to the rescue with a forced, night march to the battle scene. God sends hailstones down on the fleeing armies, which killed more than Israel's army did (Josh 10:11). To conclude the route Joshua asked God to prolong the day. Two things are clear: 1) Joshua was a man of his word. He kept his deal even though it had been deceitfully gained and 2) God was faithful to his promise of victory even though Joshua made this mistake.

¹⁴There was no day like that before it or after it, when the LORD listened to the voice of a man; for the LORD fought for Israel. Josh 10:14

3. Other Conquests (10:28-43)

One after another, the other cities of the south fall to Israel.



C. The Northern Campaign (11)

An alliance of Northern kings brought Joshua into battle. It was such a vast force but God answers "Don't be afraid of them". God has Joshua attack before the alliance is fully formed and Israel routs their enemies again. Joshua's final campaigns are against the mountain people. All victories bring glory to God.

²³So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the LORD had spoken to Moses, and Joshua gave it for an inheritance to Israel according to their divisions by their tribes Thus the land had rest from war. Josh 11:23



III. Colonizing the Land (12-22)

The remaining chapters recap the victories of the children of Israel and discuss the dividing of the spoils of war, the land, the protection and responsibilities for worship, and administration of the new land.

A. Declaring the Spoils of Victory (12)

Chapter 12 recaps the victories of Moses and Joshua and the lists of vanquished kings.

B. Dividing the Spoils of Victory (13-21)

Joshua is growing old and God tells him to divide the land among the twelve tribes. Much remains to be won, and the tribes are to continue the conquest by faith after Joshua's death (13:1-6). The allocation of the land to the various tribes is described in this section (the land east of the Jordan is given to Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. The land west of the Jordan is divided among the remaining 9.5 tribes.) as well as the inheritance of Caleb (14-15), the movement of the camp of Israel to Shiloh and the setting up of the tent of meeting (18), the cities of refuge (20), and the inheritance of the Levites (21). This section shows God's faithfulness in keeping His word almost 500 years earlier (Gen 15:12-16).



C. Dedicating the Spoils of Victory (22)

Joshua commends the Reubenites, Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh for obeying Moses and himself and helping their brothers in the wars on the west side of the Jordan. He then exhorts them to remain obedient as they are separated from the rest of the nation. As the eastern tribes return to their inheritance, they erect an altar, which the western tribes construe as worshipping idols. The true intent was to serve as a memorial to remind their descendants of their common faith. Phinehas is satisfied and civil war is averted.

IV. Joshua's Farewell Addresses (23-24)

Joshua issues a call to faith, first to the leaders (23:2) and then to the whole nation (24:1). The deaths of Joshua and Eleazar and the burial of Joseph's bones are then recorded.

A. Joshua to the Leaders (23)

Joshua reminds the leaders that it has been the Lord that has fought for them and it will be the Lord who will thrust the remaining nations out before them. They must lead the nation to obey the Law of the Lord (23:6), not associate with the pagans (23:7), and cling to and love the Lord (23:8-9).

Joshua then warns them of the result of disobedience to the Lord (23:0-16).

B. Joshua to the Nation (24:1-28)

The Lord reviews all that the Lord had done for the nation beginning with Abraham (24:1-4), then Moses (24:5-10), and finally Joshua (24:11-13). Joshua then charges the people to "fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and truth." (24:14). They are to choose whom they will serve, but Joshua and his house will serve the Lord. The people declare that they will serve the Lord. Joshua sets up a large stone by the Tabernacle to remind the people of their promise (24:27).

C. The Deaths (23-24)

The book ends with the death of Joshua, Eleazar, and the final burial of Joseph's bones, which had been carried carefully during all these years. The birthplace of the patriarchs was one of the major arguing points for the right of the Jews to a nation of their own in these lands in 1967. Their dream is still to own the entire Promised Land, but we know that will not happen until God unites the land under the rule of the Messiah, Jesus. Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who served Joshua. Then the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord... (Judg 2:11)

Homework

1. Reread Joshua and read Judges.
2. In what way do you do "what is evil in the sight of the Lord?"
3. In what way do you "do what is right in your own eyes?"
4. Reread the Pentateuch