

## **#6. THE BOOK OF JOSHUA**

1. Joshua is the first of the historical narratives of the Old Testament. It contains the story of the successful campaign to conquer Canaan and divide the land among the tribes of Israel. This section of the Bible is called The Historical Books, and is comprised of Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles. These books trace the history of Israel from the campaign to occupy the Promised Land through the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of Solomon's Temple. A second group of historical books (Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther) deals with the re-gathering of the Jews, the rebuilding of the Temple, and the restoration of the walls of Jerusalem after the 70 years of exile.
2. **The author is Joshua.** His name means *Jehovah saves*. Phinehas the High Priest may have written the closing portion of the book (24:29-33). The date of the writing is no later than 1375BC.

### **3. Key Chapters**

- Chapters 1-5:12 give the account of the approach to and entrance of Israel into the Promised Land.
- Chapters 5:13-12:24 detail three military campaigns by Joshua. It is in this section we learn about Jericho, Ai, and Gibeon. The first campaign was a battle for the central locations. The second campaign was the conquering of the southern cities. Finally, the northern areas were brought under subjugation by Joshua and the armies of Israel. 11:16-12:24 summarize the thirty-one kings who were defeated by Joshua.
- Chapters 13-24 describe the allotment of the land among the twelve tribes, the establishing of special Cities of Refuge, the establishing of Levitical cities, and the return of the eastern tribes (Manasseh, Reuben and Gad) to the land they selected before the conquest. Chapter 24 concludes with the farewell speech of Joshua and his death. Eleazar the High Priest also died and was followed by his son Phinehas, who was one of the truly great High Priests of Israel.

### **4. Key Verses**

- **Joshua 1:11 NASB** "Pass through the midst of the camp and command the people, saying, 'Prepare provisions for yourselves, for within three days you are to cross this Jordan, to go in to possess the land which the Lord your God is giving you, to possess it.'"

- **Joshua 2:8-12 NASB** Now before they lay down, she came up to them on the roof, <sup>9</sup>and said to the men, “I know that the Lord has given you the land, and that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before you. <sup>10</sup>For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. <sup>11</sup>When we heard *it*, our hearts melted and no courage remained in any man any longer because of you; for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath. <sup>12</sup>Now therefore, please swear to me by the Lord, since I have dealt kindly with you, that you also will deal kindly with my father’s household, and give me a pledge of truth”
- **Joshua 3:5-7 NASB** Then Joshua said to the people, “Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you.” <sup>6</sup>And Joshua spoke to the priests, saying, “Take up the ark of the covenant and cross over ahead of the people.” So they took up the ark of the covenant and went ahead of the people.<sup>7</sup> Now the Lord said to Joshua, “This day I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you.
- **Joshua 5:13-15 NASB** Now it came about when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing opposite him with his sword drawn in his hand, and Joshua went to him and said to him, “Are you for us or for our adversaries?” <sup>14</sup>He said, “No; rather I indeed come now as captain of the host of the Lord.” And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and bowed down, and said to him, “What has my lord to say to his servant?” <sup>15</sup>The captain of the Lord’s host said to Joshua, “Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy.” And Joshua did so.
- **Joshua 11:23 NASB** So 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.
- **Joshua 24:31 NASB** Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who survived Joshua, and had known all the deeds of the Lord which He had done for Israel.

## 5. Key People

- Joshua - the general of Israel’s armies and successor to Moses.
- Rahab - a resident of Jericho who assisted the two Israelite spies. By her faith she and her family were saved. We see her mentioned in the lineage of Jesus Christ.
- Achan - an Israelite man from the tribe of Judah who kept riches for himself found in the rubble of Jericho. All the spoils of Jericho were considered unclean. His actions resulted

in the defeat of Israel by an inferior force. His treachery resulted in his death at the hands of the elders.

- Eleazar - the second High Priest of Israel; son of Aaron and nephew of Moses.
- Phinehas - the grandson of Aaron and son of Eleazar the High Priest (Exodus 6:25), who distinguished himself as a youth at Shittim by his zeal against the evil counsel of Balaam. He saw the immorality with which the Moabites and Midianites had successfully tempted the people of God (Numbers 25:1-9) to worship Baal-peor, so he personally executed an Israelite man and a Midianite woman while they were together in the man's tent, running a javelin or spear through them both, thus ending a plague sent by God to punish the Israelites for sexually intermingling with the Midianites. After the entry to the land of Israel and the death of his father, he was appointed the third High Priest of Israel.

## 6. Key Places

- Israel's earliest steps in Canaan can be traced from an Acacia Grove east of the Jordan, to Gilgal (the place they stopped after crossing the Jordan River miraculously), to Jericho and Ai.
- Following the early victories, there was another consecration service between the mountains of Ebal and Gerizim.
- Significant battles occurred at Gibeon, the Valley of Aijalon, and Hazor.
- The Tabernacle of God was set up at Shiloh.
- The farewell of Joshua took place as Israel gathered at Shechem.

## 7. Key Themes

- **Abundant Life** - God intended more than deliverance from bondage for His people. He also promised a life of provision, prosperity, and peace in the Land of Promise.
- **Victorious Life** - In all, Joshua defeated 31 nations. God's plan is for us to live free of subjugation, curses, and sin. His plan for Israel in the land was staggering:
  - He promised to make them into a great nation (Genesis 12:1-3).

- He promised to judge the Canaanites for their wickedness and give the land into the hands of Israel (Genesis 15:16).
  - He promised that He would be the strength they needed to defeat nations that were better armed and much larger than they were (Exodus 33:1-3; Genesis 17).
  - He promised to give Israel world-wide influence that would be disproportionate to their small size if they would live lives of holiness and dedication to Jehovah (Deuteronomy 4:5-8).
  - He promise was contingent upon their willingness to cleanse the land of the evil that had desecrated it (Deuteronomy 7:1-5; 12:2).
- **Sanctified Life** - The extent of victory they would experience would be directly related to their willingness to live in holiness and obedience.

## 8. The Contents of Joshua

- Preparing to Inherit the Land (1:1-5:15)
  - (1) The call of Joshua (1:1-18)
  - (2) Preparing for Battle (2:1-5:15)
- Conquering the Land (6:1-12:24)
  - (1) The Central Highlands Campaign (6:1-8:35)
    - Jericho, Ai; Achan's sin, Mt. Ebal, and Mt. Gerizim
  - (2) The Southern Campaign (9:1-10:43)
    - Gibeonites and Amorites
  - (3) The Northern Campaign (11:1-15)
    - Hazor
  - (4) Battle Summaries (11:16-12:24)
- The Spoils of War (13:1-21:45)

(1) Tribal distribution of the land (13:1-21:45)

(2) Conflicts of community life are reviewed and resolved (22:1-34)

- Joshua's farewell speech and death (23:1-34)

(1) Joshua's instructions to the Elders (23:1-16)

(2) Joshua encourages the people of Israel (24:1-28)

(3) The death of Joshua and Eleazar (24:29-33)

### **Worth noting**

- The military campaign described in Joshua required seven years to complete.
- The section of Scripture from Joshua thru Kings (excepting Ruth) is also known as *The Former Prophets*.
- Though it is generally agreed that Joshua is the author of the book, the account was probably received in its final form some years after Joshua's death. We see the phrase denoting that certain memorials or enemies *are here to this day* (see 4:9; 5:9; 7:26; 8:28-29; 10:27; 13:3; 15:63; 16:10). These phrases remind us both of God's faithfulness as well as the need to complete the task God had given. A good understanding of this tension between *completed victory* and *anticipated victory* is found in *How to Read the Bible Book by Book* by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart (Zondervan Publishers; Grand Rapids, Michigan; 2002). Most conservative scholars agree that it was in its final form before the reign of David (see 15:63; 2 Samuel 5:5-9).
- It is helpful to remember the following when reading the Old Testament historical narratives:
  - Joshua, Judges, and Ruth discuss Israel's history before they have a king.
  - Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles are the history of Israel and Judah's monarchs.
  - Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther occur in the period after the monarchy is discontinued (after 586BC.).

- **When reading Joshua**

- Remember that Ephesians is the New Testament counterpart to Joshua.
- Remember that Joshua explains God's intent for His people - a victorious, overcoming life.
- When we met Joshua he was a young man. When he died Joshua was 110 years old (24:29).