

## Joshua: Jesus The Conqueror

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In Deuteronomy 34: 7-8 we read that *“Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died. His eyes were not dim nor his natural vigor diminished. And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days. So the days of weeping and mourning for Moses ended.”* Then in Deuteronomy verses 10-12 we are told *“But since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, in all the signs and wonders which the Lord sent to him to do in the land of Egypt, before Pharaoh, before all his servants, and in all his land, and by all that might power and all the great terror which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel.”* And into this dramatic scene the 9<sup>th</sup> verse records, *“Now Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him; so the children of Israel heeded him, and as the Lord had commanded Moses.”*

It is beneficial to look at a time line with regards to this part of history prior to getting into the book of Joshua. From the Exodus from Egypt to the first census taken of the people at the foot of Mount Sinai 13 months had passed. The book of Numbers or as it is known to the Jews "*In the wilderness*" has an interesting timeline which sheds some light upon Joshua.

- From chapter 1 to chapter 10 of Numbers where they are at the foot of Mount Sinai around 20 days.
- From chapter 10 to chapter 22 they travel to Kadesh Barnea which is the boarder of Canaan and the promise land around 100 miles. They would remain for 38 years, 3 months and 10 days.
- From chapter 23 to 36, primarily deal with the events of the 40<sup>th</sup> year of wanderings.

You see, Moses said in Numbers 10:29 to his father-in-law, "*We are setting out for the place of which the Lord said, 'I will give it to you.' Come with us, and we will treat you well; for the Lord has promised good things to Israel.*" Yet 40 years would transpire and only two of the original 2 million or better that left Egypt would enter into the land of promise. Simply put, the generation that came from the exodus was not the generation of conquest as their unbelief brought discipline not blessing. **Their earthly experience became one characterized by aimless wandering instead of a walk of anticipation.**

Joshua is the sixth book of the bible and serves as the capstone of the first five books of Moses called the Pentateuch. Without this book we would be left with a gap in the history of the nation. The aims of the book are twofold:

1. To proclaim the end of Israel's wilderness wanderings where by it took a generation to rid the people of the world.

2. To speak of the beginning of the new life in the land of promise.

The book of Joshua not only reveals the grace of God and His power to keep His promises but it also reveals what He requires those who inherit His promises. Make no mistake about it, the book is about the land and the people. God required the nation to overcome obstacles and fight battles before they could enjoy what He had given them. The truth concerning the book of Joshua seems to be paradoxical as the land was a free gift to the nation which they received by grace alone yet they had to fight for every square inch of it. In the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter of Hebrews, the author uses this very book as a spiritual illustration of New Testament believers, saying in verses 8-11 *“For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day. There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. For he who has entered His rest himself also ceased from his works as God did from His. Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.”* **The point of the book is not to give account of Joshua’s life but rather to reveal how the Lord made good on His promises.** The book covers roughly a **15 year period of time** divided between **three locations**:

1. Chap. 1-5 **One month**: East of the Jordan to crossing over into the land of promise
2. Chap. 6-13:7 **Seven years**: Conquering the land of Canaan (Chap. 6-8 central Canaan, Chap. 9-10 Southern Canaan, Chap. 11-12 Northern Canaan). Then the first seven verses of chapter 13 he lists the areas yet to be conquered.
3. Chap. 13:8-21 **Eight years**: settling the 12 tribes on both sides of the Jordan River. (In 13:8-33 he settles those 2 ½ tribes east of the Jordan River. Then in Chap. 14-19:51 he settles the other 9 ½ tribes west of the Jordan). Then in chapters 20-21 he sets up the judicial and religious community by settling the six cities of refuge and 48 cities given to the Levites which are scattered among the 12 tribes.

4. Finally, the book closes with Chapters 22-24 which constitutes conditions for the continuance in the land of promise.

The authorship is believed by most to be the person who bares the title of the book and although it is never stated directly it is inferred by several things:

1. The author was an eyewitness of the things recorded and we know this because of the detail accounts and the use of personal pronouns.
2. It was written soon after the events by use of the phrase “*unto this day*”.
3. Historical and traditional evidence identifies Joshua as the author.

Joshua was born in Egypt and along with Caleb was the only other person to survive the 40 years of wilderness wanderings. He is not your typical hero, though being a soldier, he does no daring deeds, yet he follows the Lord at all costs, his life is best characterized by Joshua 1:5 “*No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you.*” He first is brought into scripture in Exodus 17 where we learn nothing of his ancestry but much about his character as verse 10 records that “*So Joshua did as Moses said to him, and fought with Amalek.*” As Aaron and Hur held up the hands of Moses upon the hill, Joshua prevailed over the enemy. So what we learn in this first mention is that early on Joshua had caught the eye of Moses for his courage and obedience. In Exodus 24 as Moses went up into the mount, Joshua went with him for awhile but was left in the wilderness of 40 days and 40 nights while Moses communed with the Lord and the people along with Aaron partied and made idols to worship Joshua remained separate and obedient to his calling. Then, we read of him again in Exodus 33:11 where it says, “*the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. And he would return to camp, but his servant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the tabernacle.*” In Numbers 13, he was chosen by the Lord

along with 11 others to spy out the land of promise but perhaps we may forget that they were chosen from each tribe of their fathers everyone a leader among them. All 12 returned with a report that the land was blessed but Joshua and Caleb said that the inhabitants of the land were too big and strong to overtake. A further affirmation of Joshua's character can be found in Numbers 32:11-12 where twice the Lord says of him and Caleb that *"they have wholly followed the Lord."* At Joshua's coronation, in Deuteronomy 34:9, we are told that *"Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him, so the children of Israel heeded him, and did as the Lord had commanded Moses."*

### **I Chapter 1-5 Preparing The Person For The Promises**

The first five chapters are concerned with the preparations of the people for the entrance into the land of promise. God's promises are open ended; they could have all that they were willing to take and as such the preparation of the people, by the Lord is to ensure that all who I wish too may possess every spiritual blessing and would live in all the promises their heart would desire.

Hey folks, pay attention to the way the Lord speaks to Joshua here, as He says that in verse 2 *"I am giving"* and then in verse 3 *"I have given"*. "I am giving can serve as a theme to this entire book. What this reveals is, the whole land was given, but they could only possess that which they claimed, which is why the Lord said the phrase *"every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you"*. Now saints, how much of God's promises go unclaimed in our lives simply because we will not *"tread upon what the Lord has given us"*? Why not just cause Israel to face no obstacles or enemies in inheriting the land of promise? Listen carefully friends to what I'm about to tell you:

1. **The promises could only be obtained by those who were not content with Egypt. Not content with the things of this world and their former life.**
2. **The promises could only be enjoyed by those who would continue to press on with all of what God had for them.**

Folks, this is true with our Christian life now if you aren't satisfied with the amount of victory and joy you currently have, then you only have to get up and get going. Ah, but the way of possessing the land won't be easy, as the land of promise is also a battlefield where we will need to continue to die to self in order to gain.

There are those that spiritually see the promise land as a typology of heaven and crossing over the Jordan as death; "*Swing low sweet chariot*" was a hymn that popularized this notion. But the problem with this analogy is that it doesn't fit the book of Joshua, as the book is about defeating the enemy. In fact, you will discover in the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter, that Joshua records the fact that prior to entering the land of promise, only two kings were conquered by Moses, while 31 were defeated in the land of promise by Joshua. The simple truth is that there were far more enemies and obstacles in the land of promise then there was in the wilderness wanderings. So, I think that what we shall see here in this book is about "abundant life" living, a victorious Christian life enjoyed in God's promises as we defeat the enemies of our faith. Based upon the geographical coordinates of verse 4, the total land God gave Israel was over 30,000 square miles and at the Zenith of Israel's power under Solomon they possessed 3,000 square miles or 1/10 of what God had given them.

## II Chapter 6-12 Conquering Our Canaan

How were they to conquer what they had failed to do so 38 years earlier? In verse 2, we are told that the Lord told Joshua that He had given the city into their hands and in Hebrews 11:30, we are told the means by which the Lord would bring this about as we are told that ***by faith*** *the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days.*” The plan for advancement beyond the walls was outlined by none other than the “*Commander of the army of the Lord*” and there was no room given for human schemes or military tactics. Nothing man could do except obey the Lord would bring the walls down. The walls of the world must come down before we can enjoy the riches of His grace in the land of promise.

**The 7<sup>th</sup> Chapter:** This is the only defeat and casualties listed in the book of Joshua and they needn't be as the defeat was because they thought they were sufficient in themselves. We need to realize that we are as dependent upon the Ai's as we are for the 40 feet wall Jerichos. In Deuteronomy 11:11, Moses described the promise land as a land “*of hills and valleys*” which not only describes the terrain of the promise land, it often describes the geography of the Christian life! Any believer that has spent any time walking after the presence of the Lord will tell you that such a life is often characterized by “*hills*” of incredible joys and “*valleys*” of despair and discouragement. Hey, listen up friends, you can't have the mountains without some valleys and I have found that spending time in the valleys causes me to desire and appreciate the mountains all the more.

**The 9<sup>th</sup> Chapter:** Begins the advance into the Southern part of the conquest which will conclude in the 10<sup>th</sup> chapter, when Israel wars against the coalition of nations listed in verses 1-2 of chapter 9. Joshua records two separate threats once they came down the mountain of bareness. The first, was a confederation of kingdoms ready to attack but the far more dangerous threat was

the nation that wanted to join them. Friends, Satan sometimes comes at us as a devouring lion (1 Peter 5:8), but sometimes he comes as a deceiving serpent (2 Corinthians 11:3).

**The 10<sup>th</sup> Chapter:** Just as God used the defeat at Ai to form a battle plan for victory over Ai (chapter 8), so also He used Joshua's mistake with the Gibeonites to protect Gibeon and accelerate the conquest of Canaan. The mistakes we make may embarrass us, especially those that are caused by our running ahead of the Lord and not seeking His Word, but we need to remember that no mistake is final for the dedicated Christian. God can use even our blunders to accomplish His purposes. Somebody defined success as "*the art of making your mistakes when nobody's looking*"; but a better definition would be "*the art of seeing victory where other people see only defeat.*"

**The 11<sup>th</sup> Chapter:** The Southern campaign was finished in the 10<sup>th</sup> chapter 7 years after the entrance into the land of promise but Joshua doesn't say, "*Ok fellows, let's just stop here and catch our breath*". No, he immediately moves into the northern campaign into the areas of Mount Hermon, the Sea of Galilee and the Valley of Megiddo. The key to this aspect of the conquest was like what we have seen so far and that is the complete obedience to the Lord. What we have here, is nothing more than a desperate attempt by the consolidated king's of the north to stop what God was doing but notice that this didn't work.

**The 12<sup>th</sup> Chapter:** The 11<sup>th</sup> chapter marks the end of united action in the land of promise and the beginning of the individual tribe's warfare. It will now be up to the individual tribes to appropriate that which was won corporately. The book of Joshua is divided into two parts:

- a. The conquest: This chapter with its summary ends the conquest stage.

- b. The settlement: the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter to the end of chapter 24, concludes the settlement stage.

These kinds of sections seem a bit, well “boring” but they were anything but boring to those who were looking to inherit the promise land, as this section spoke to them about what land belonged to them. Oh, how much this parallels our earthly Christian experience, as it is now up to us to appropriate all the blessings won us in the victory of Christ. There is much left in the ground of blessings that are ours to possess but we will need to apply the Biblical principals of spiritual warfare taught us thus far. How prone we Christians are to blame our failure upon the lack of God’s power and provision instead of upon our unwillingness to receive what He has given us. Allen Redpath rightly comments when he says, **“It is true that the victory of the Cross was decisive, but it is also true that the one will experience only as much of that victory as by faith he appropriates personally. May God give His Church in these day’ people who are desperate to be right with Him and utterly dissatisfied with what they are apart from His grace”.**

### III. Chapter 13-21 Settling The Settlers

In the first chapter, Joshua was given two mandates from the Lord:

- A. Verses 2-3 **Conquer:** *“Arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them--the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses.”* Conquer the inhabitants of the land that was in control of the cities this took approximately 7 years.
- B. Verse 6 **Settle:** *“Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them.”* The second part of Joshua’s commission was to settle the land which took 8 years. Did you get that? **It**

**took longer to “settle in” than it did to “root out” the enemy!** It was going to take as much strength and courage to possess the land as it did to win the land.

In chapters 13-21, we will be given the specific geographical regions allotted for each tribe. In a sense, these boundaries revealed just what they had coming from God with regards to His blessed promises. It always seems a bit trite to say that “*God has a wonderful plan for your life*”, but with the giving of the land, these tribes and families could see God’s wonderful plan.