

# Books of The Bible

## A Survey of Joshua

### Introduction

- 1) A casual observing of the four books of Moses which follow Genesis will show that each is connected to the former by the word “and”.
  - a) Ex. 1:1 - “Now” these are the names, however, the Hebrew word “And” is better.
  - b) Lev. 1:1 - “And” the Lord spake unto Moses
  - c) Num.1:1 - “And” the Lord spake unto Moses
  - d) Deut.1:3 - “And” it came to pass
    - i) This indicates a chronologically developing story. The narrative of Abraham began when God called him out of Ur of the Chaldees (Gen. 15:7) which was followed by His pledge to make of Abram a great nation (Gen. 13:16; 15:5; 22:17). Exodus begins with his family becoming that great nation, the nation of Israel. However, as such they were, from the human perspective, just another enslaved people, but different in that according to God’s own promise (Gen. 15:13) He delivered them by redemption and power (Ex. chs. 12-14). Then for forty years they were nomads in the wilderness until God gave them a dwelling place, their inheritance, Canaan. By and large the balance of the Old Testament tells of their experiences in their inheritance. Therefore, when we consider Joshua, it is the record of the first possessing of their promised land.
- 2) The book begins and ends with a crisis situation because in both the leaders die. Very emphatically it states, “Now after the death of Moses” (ch. 1:1) and “Moses my servant is dead” (ch. 1:2). It ends with, “And after these things that Joshua the son of Nun the servant of the Lord died” (ch. 24:29) and then it is stated, “Eleazar the son of Aaron died” (ch. 24:33). Two deaths of the leading men of the nation, both whom were called, “the servant of the Lord” (ch. 14:7). A huge vacuum was left and multiple questions, “Who will lead the children of Israel”, the pondering, “If only Joshua had lived a little longer”, but such was not God’s way. How often we come to a crisis in our lives and someone we have known to be a spiritual shepherd is no longer there. We wish we could speak to them again for some guidance, but it is not to be. By these experiences we are learning to depend on God more fully for direction in life.
- 3) It is often said and sung that Canaan is a type of Heaven but this is not exactly true. Heaven is not a place of conflict but Canaan was (ch. 6:1-18; 8:1-28). In Heaven there will be no attractions to entice us away from God, we will not need deliverance from the enemies of the flesh, world and the devil. However, it is true that the children of Israel were going to a place their eyes had never see as we also, but Canaan was not the “ideal rest” or “sabbath” (Heb. 4:4-8).
- 4) It is of note that the Septuagint adds a little section here. While it is not necessarily inspired, it is a connecting between Joshua and Judges. 3:12. The section reads, *In that day the children of Israel took the ark of God, and carried it about among them; and Phineas (Phinehas) exercised the priests office in the room of Eleazet his father till he died, and was buried in his own place Gabaar. But the sons of Israel departed every one to their own place and to their own city. And the sons of Israel worshipped Astarte (Asherah) and “Astaroh, and the gods of the nations round about them. And the Lord delivered them into the hands of Eglon King of Moab and he ruled over them eighteen years.*
- 5) One of the matters which is puzzling is not that God used a prostitute which would be the first person a couple of wayfaring men would visit, and if spies, did not want to draw attention. However, it is puzzling that God used a woman who told lies in the furtherance of His purpose. The woman told those in authority that she did not know who the men were (ch. 2:4) but she did (ch. 2:9-11) and she told the men of the city that the men had left (ch. 2:5), when in fact they were up on the roof (ch. 2:8). Yet a consideration of what the men told Rahab would make most of us do the same, “tell a lie”, because our own life and that of our family was at stake (ch. 2:14). If Rahab were to tell the truth she was signing a death warrant for herself and loved ones (ch. 2:20). I am aware that God would have worked out a purpose for her for she was to be in the genealogy of the Lord (Matt. 1:3 Tamar), and when such men as Abraham (Gen. 12:19) and Peter (Matt. 26:74) told a lie, which of us have never told one? Can we really point a finger at her?

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- 6) The names by which the Ark is described:
- “The Ark of the covenant of the LORD your God” (ch. 3:3)
  - “The ark of the covenant” (ch. 3:11).
  - “The Ark of the covenant of the LORD of all the earth” (ch. 3:11)
  - “The Ark” (ch. 3:15)
  - “The Ark of the covenant of the LORD” (ch. 3:17)
  - “Ark of the LORD” (ch. 4:11)
- 7) Much time has been spent on why Joshua put the stones from the land in the river? I see a contrast between the two sets of stones. The stones were carried up from the Jordan because it was the command of God (ch. 4:3) and they were to be placed where they were to lodge that night (ch. 4:3). Secondly, they were to be a memorial for how the Lord worked a miracle to bring the people and their children into the promised land. He caused the river to dry up until all of Israel “passed over” (ch. 3:13; 4:10, 12, 13, 23; 5:1); “clean passed over” (ch. 3:17; 4:1, 11). By contrast, there is no reference to God commanding Joshua to take the stones from the land and put them in the Jordan. Unless there is an intimation of such (ch. 4:10), there is no reference of them being a memorial.

### Author

Nowhere are we told who the original author is and since Joshua does not mention his name, it would seem that the book is not an autobiography but a blending of a national historical document and a personal semi-biography. I say “semi” because Joshua was forty years of age when Moses sent him to Kadesh-barnea (ch. 14:7) and when he was directing the children of Israel, he was eighty five years of age (ch. 14:10).

### Purpose for the Book

It is comparatively easy to give a structure of Joshua as with any book, however, it is, in my mind, much more enriching to seek the thought flow of the book. What is the goal the book is seeking to convey to us, and how that end is reached? What then is the thought flow of Joshua? It is my understanding that we are given a sign post directing us to that goal at the beginning of the book:

- 1) “Go over this Jordan thou and all this people, unto the land which I do give unto them” (ch. 1:2). However, the questions would have been asked, “What is the extent of the land we are to inherit, how can we be sure we shall possess the land, how shall it be taken from those already there, and what do we do when we get the land? The rest of the book answers these questions:
- To what extent of the land are we to inherit?
    - Answer: “Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast” (ch. 1:3, 4).
  - How can we be sure we will inherit the land?
    - Answer: “There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I swear unto their fathers to give them. Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. Have not I

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commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.” (ch. 1:5-9)

- c) How shall it be taken from those already there?
  - i) Answer: By various means as decreed by God. Sometimes it shall be given and other times they will have to fight (ch. 6:1-24; 8:1-29). Sadly, in the case of Ai due to the sin of Achan, about thirty six men of Israel died (ch. 7:5).
- d) What do we do when we get the land?
  - i) Answer: They were to divide the land by lot (ch. 13:7). How it was divided to the individual tribes was by lots (ch. 13:7-19 to ch. 21:45).

### The Violence in Joshua

One of the great difficulties is how we seek to rationalize the decrees of God slaughtering the people with the statement that “God is love” (1 Jn. 4:8). Joshua is a book in which to our minds was genocide. Apparently innocent people were slain just because God had decreed and promised Israelites the land for their own. Surely the Great God who made the earth could have easily given them a piece of land and human life would have been spared. The questions are, “What sort of a war mongering God would do that?” “How can that be righteous?” “Where is the God of pity and love who would demand the slaughter of little babies?” To such questions there are several answers.

- a) God must never be accused of wickedness or being unmerciful. His holiness demands punishment as our moral character also demands punishment for wrong doers. In the beginning of man’s history humanity knew the character of God as is evident from the lives of the patriarchs and even the heathen (Gen. 20:3-5). However, man rejected the true character and attributes of God and made themselves gods of wood and stone etc., and made them after the image of man, sex, animals etc. (Rom. 1:18-32). Their lives and religions were obnoxious characters of God and insulting to Him. If any individual insulted us, mocking how we look or speak, what would our response be? If we were angry with them would the anger be justified? When humanity as a nation despises God, mocks Him despite His goodness, as the Canaanites did, did God not have the right to destroy them? Some might say, “perhaps if someone told them about the true God they would have turned from their ways?” That is lovely unrealistic idealism for in this age (and man has not changed) the message of the true gospel of Jesus Christ is spread across the world but many, by the millions, are rejecting not only God’s moral code but also His salvation.
- b) Furthermore, God was seeking to teach His people a major lesson which was, if they do the same things then the judgment of God will fall on them and they also will suffer the consequences.
- c) We only see matters from the human and very limited perspective. When God let all Job’s children die in one day, lose all his cattle in one day so that he went from being a regal sheik to a pauper and then lose his health, Job’s wife was no different from us. Humanly speaking there was no answer for it and his wife said, “Curse God, and die” (Job 2:9). The woman loved her husband and hated to see him in such distress and humiliation. However, when we come to the end of the book there is found the abundant blessing of God and Job learnt that the world did not revolve around him. There was a much greater plan being worked out.

Can we use this situation and apply it to today?

- a) Can we take this situation and apply it to today, meaning that if I do not like a group of people and want what they have either as an individual or a nation, can I use this book to support my argument? A thousand times “No”. This was a warfare which Yahweh directly commanded to progress by divine revelation to his chosen leaders Moses and Joshua, who both were Prophets, meaning they received direct messages from Yahweh about his will. It was not a man made idea to take that which belonged to others and take it off them, or kill them to show their superior ability in conflict. So if a reader wanted to use the warfare in Joshua to justify human warfare, they’d need to assert that their war plan was not merely justifiable. They’d have to claim their plans were revealed directly by God.

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- b) God not only declared war, He is also the primary campaign manager and power for good or ill, which depended on the obedience of the people (as Achan did with the accursed items - ch. 7:1-25). The Lord brought victory through the miraculous. It was so foolish to man and war strategists to march around a city each day in silence (ch. 6:10) and then on the seventh day after the walking to give a shout (ch. 6:4, 16, 20). The children of Israel just had to obey for victory and then stand in awe with whatever action the Lord did. If a modern reader wanted to justify violence from Joshua, they'd have to set aside strategies, weapons and training and expect miraculous victories!
- c) The conflicts were at times responses to Canaanite aggression.
  - i) After the battles of Jericho and Ai, Israel's wars in Canaan were responses to aggression by Canaanite kings. In chapters 5-11 we read that when the Canaanites heard what God had done they massed together, combined their armies and prepared to annihilate the Hebrews. The book presents these conspiracies not just as military resistance against Israel, but as a rejection of Yahweh's presence in Canaan, in contrast with Rahab's confession of faith.
  - ii) The selectiveness of the conflicts.
    - 1. This was not primarily a political war but a "Holy War" between paganism and truth. Apart from a few general statements, there is not a mention indicating an Israelite assault on peasants or on farming villages. The central part of the land, which was to belong to Ephraim and Manasseh and was the heartland of early Israelite settlement, provides not a single battle story. Israel moves in apparently without a fight.
    - 2. History informs us that the kings who fought against Israel (chs. 5-11) were all appointed by Egypt to bereft Canaan of all its riches for the greater glory of Pharaoh. When this is obeyed then we understand that the will of the Lord was to destroy the city rulers who controlled Canaan, breaking Egypt's exploitation of Canaan, and defying Pharaoh's claims to be God. The battle narrative climaxes in Joshua 12 with a list, not of annihilated population groups or destroyed cities, but of slain kings, dead tyrants. There is a spiritual lesson for us here.

### Aspects of God

Joshua contains a number of Names or descriptions of the Lord which are very interesting and informative for at least three reasons:

- a) They are such because the glory of God's ways are expanded when the individual looks at the occasion when they were used.
- b) They show the emphasis God puts on His name "Jehovah"
- c) They reveal something of His character.

The following are some of the names the Lord is presented by. In chapter 1:1 He is referred to as the "LORD" which is the word "Jehovah", and it relates to the moral character of God over all humanity.

He is also:

- 1) God is the covenant keeping God. Joshua chapter 21 is a summary of the book: "Thus the Lord gave unto Israel all the land that he swore to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein" (ch 21:43). The key words in this sentence, "give and gave," are repeated throughout the book. For example, at the head of the book, the Lord commands Joshua to cross the Jordan, "unto the land which I do give to them"; the land that "I have given unto you"; "the land which he swore unto their fathers to give them" (ch. 1:2, 3, 6).
- 2) God is the administrator of the leaders of His people (ch. 1:1-2)
- 3) God has the right to dispose of land as he sees fit (ch. 13:6, 14:2; 15:1; 16:1)
- 4) God has the ability to do with geography and rivers which He pleases (ch. 3:14-4:1)
- 5) God is the Observer of every secret thing (ch. 7:19-26)
- 6) God is generous of that which belongs to Him (ch. 7:11-13)
- 7) God is the controller of the sun and moon in their movements (ch. 10:12-13)

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- 8) God is a God of grace and that He provides the cities of refuge for those who kill without intention (ch. 20:1-5)
- 9) God is the Holy God (ch. 24:19)
- 10) God is the judge and the discipline of His people (ch. 24:19-20)
- 11) His purposes cannot be thwarted (ch. 1:4)
  - a) God had promised to give the land of Abraham and it had been a major pledge in the bringing of the children out of Egypt. Despite the fact that the first generation of those who came out of Egypt rebelled and were disciplined by God, the promise still held true. They would be given the land.
    - i) This was despite the opposition of the then inhabitants of the land and Joshua being given a new promise (ch. 1:5). Then God adds further statements to Joshua which He had not given to Moses, "I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee . . . the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest" (ch. 1:5-9).
- 12) He is God over all creation and all inhabitants of them (ch. 2:11).
  - a) The sovereign providential dealings of God over the unsaved for unknown to them His purposes for His people (ch. 2:15).
- 13) He is the Living God (ch. 3:10). He is also called, "The Lord your God" (ch. 3:9).

### Aspects of Christ

- 1) One of the many observations concerning Joshua as a shadow of the Lord is his Name. In Hebrew "Joshua" is "Yehoshua" or "Yeshuah", which is the Hebrew equivalent of the name "Jesus". Joshua was given this name by Moses (Num. 13:16). Furthermore, when the writer to the Hebrews was speaking of Joshua (Heb. 4:8), he calls him by the name "Jesus".
- 2) The Lord is seen with the likeness of a human being, having the appearance of a human body but not incarnate, it is called a Christophany. He is spoken of as:
  - a) A "Man" (ch. 5:13)
  - b) He is the "captain of the host of the LORD" (ch. 5:14, 15)
  - c) God is the commander-in-chief in conflict (ch. 8:1-21)

<b>Moses and Joshua contrasts</b>	
Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt . (Ex. 12:31-35)	Joshua led the children of Israel into the promised land. (Josh. 1:2-4)
Moses led the children of Israel miraculously through the Red Sea (Ex. 14:16-31)	Joshua led the children of Israel miraculously through the Jordan (Josh. 3:7-4:13)
Moses sent spies into Canaan (Num. 13:16)	Joshua sent spies sent to Egypt (Josh. 2:1)
Moses allocates land on the east side of the Jordan. (Num. 34:15)	Joshua allocates land on the west side of the Jordan. (Josh 13:7)

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<b>Moses and Joshua similarities</b>	
<b>Similar experiences</b>	<b>References</b>
Enjoyed the presence of the Lord	Moses – Ex. 3:12 Joshua – Josh. 1:5, 3:7
Led the people across body of water on dry ground	Moses – Ex. 14:1-31 Joshua – Josh. 3:14-17
Interpreted God's will	Moses – Ex. 6:1-8 Joshua – Josh. 4:1-5, 6:1-7
Gave a final speech to Israel	Moses – Deut. 32:1-43, 33:1-29 Joshua – Josh. 23:1-16
God made each of them great in the eyes of the people	Moses – Ex. 14:31, Deut. 34:10-12 Joshua – Josh. 4:14
Experienced appearances of God's messenger	Moses – Ex. 3:2, 14:19 Joshua – Josh. 5:13-15
Called the servant of the LORD	Moses – Num. 12:7-8 Joshua – Josh. 24:29
Both gave a prolonged address before dying	Moses - Deut. 32:1-43 Joshua - Josh. 23:2-16; 24:1-15

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**May God grant us good understanding as He, by His Holy Spirit, deigns to guide us into all truth.  
John 16:13**

Rowan Jennings, Abbotsford, British Columbia