

Notes on Joshua 1

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Introduction

Introductory questions:

1. Look through the book of Joshua and summarize its theme.
2. List 3 facts (from outside the book of Joshua) about Joshua's life.
3. Study Genesis 26:3,4 (and parallel passages) and list 3 promises God made regarding Abraham's descendants.
4. Tell how the book of Joshua relates to these promises to Abraham.
5. Study a map of Palestine (Canaan) and describe 5 characteristics or physical features of the land.

Author

Joshua (some parts may have been added by some later inspired writer)

Period of Bible History

Conquest of Canaan (click on the link to see a timeline of Bible periods: www.gospelway.com/commentary/bible_timeline.pdf).

Theme

God enables Israel to inherit the promised land of Canaan.

Main characters

Joshua, the Israelites

Background of Joshua's life:

- * Led Israel in battle against Amalek (Exo. 17:9-14)
- * Served as Moses' personal minister, accompanying him on Mt. Sinai (Exo. 24:13; 32:17; 33:11)
- * Jealous that others prophesied besides Moses (Num. 11:28)
- * Sent into Canaan as one of 12 spies. Only he and Caleb said Israel could conquer Canaan, so only those two were allowed to enter (Num. 13&14; 26:65; 32:12).
- * Appointed as Moses' successor as leader of the nation (Num. 27:15-23; Deut. 31:7,8; 34:9).
"Joshua" (Hebrew) means Jehovah Savior and is equivalent to Greek "Jesus."

Recommended Reference Work

In the Days of the Judges, Bob and Sandra Waldron, 1992

Introductory notes

Note the relationship between this book and God's promise to Abraham.

God had promised three major blessings to Abraham's descendants: 1) a great nation, 2) possession of Canaan, and 3) a blessing on all nations (salvation through Jesus) to come on all nations through His descendants -- Gen. 12:2,3,7; 15:5-8,18-21; 13:15,17; 18:18; 22:17,18; 24:7; 26:3,4,24; 28:3,4; 32:12.

Israel had become a great nation while in Egyptian captivity, fulfilling the first promise. By God's mercy Moses had led them out of Egypt and given them the law. He led them to Canaan the first time, but they refused to enter. God punished them by making them wander forty years in the wilderness. Moses led them through that wandering, but because he himself later sinned he was not allowed to enter the land.

He led the people to capture the land east of Jordan, and divided it between the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh. He died in sight of the land west of Jordan, and Joshua was appointed to lead the people into the land.

This book reveals the fulfillment of the second promise to Abraham – the land promise. Note 11:23; 21:43-45; 23:14. As such, Joshua is a symbol of Jesus, who leads us to the eternal promised land (Heb. 4:5-16).

Facts about the land of Canaan (see a MAP)

The following is a summary of information from the Waldron's notes:

Canaan is bounded by the Mediterranean Sea on the west and on the east the Jordan River, the Sea of Galilee, and Dead Sea (although the 2½ tribes did inherit territory east of Jordan). From north to south it stretches from mountainous regions north of the Sea of Galilee to the desert area south of the Dead Sea.

Dan was generally considered the northernmost city and Beersheeba the southernmost, a distance of 150 miles between them. East to west the area is about 30 miles across in the north and 55 miles in the south. The whole territory is smaller than nearly each of the states of the USA.

When Israel inherited the land it was very fertile and productive, as indicated by the fruit found there by the 12 spies. However, due to the people's unfaithfulness God later brought curses on the land as He had promised to do, so that today it is generally dry and unproductive.

The main bodies of water are the Sea, the Jordan River, the Sea of Galilee, and the Dead Sea.

Near the Sea on the west is a coastal plain. This plain is the area of Phoenicia north of Mt. Carmel. South of the mountain for a ways is the Plain of Sharon. The area south of that is Philistia.

Between this coastal plain and the Jordan valley is the Hill Country, a ridge of mountains running almost the length of the country. The Jordan valley separates these mountains from a plateau east of Jordan which stretches to the Arabian desert.

This is the territory that God had promised to give Israel. However, He said that keeping the land and prospering in it would depend on their faithfulness to Him. As a result, they actually held more or less of the land at various times.

Peoples of the land

God named the peoples of the land that He promised to give the Israelites as follows: Canaanites, Amorites, Hittites, Girgashites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites (Exodus 3:17; Deut. 7:1; etc.). These were really tribes living in different areas of the land. The strongest of them were the Amorites, Canaanites, and Hittites. Most of these tribes inhabited the land west of Jordan. But the Amorites lived predominately just east of Jordan.

Still further east from the Amorites lived the Ammonites. South of the Ammonites lived the Moabites and then the Edomites. These peoples were distant relatives of Israel as descendants of Lot and Esau. God commanded Israel to seek to be peaceable with these nations and did not promise to give their lands to Israel (though they often attacked Israel resulting in war).

These are the lands and the peoples we will discuss at some length in the book of Joshua as Israel wars against them to take their lands in fulfillment of God's promise.

God commanded Israel, not just to take the lands of these people, but to utterly destroy them and their idols. They were to make no marriages with these people. Otherwise, they would be influenced by these people to commit idolatry with their gods (Deut. 7; 9:1-6). We will see Israel's partial fulfillment of this command resulting in exactly the problems God predicted.

Outline of the book

A. Israel Enters Canaan (Joshua 1-5)

* Joshua appointed to replace Moses to lead Israel into Canaan — Num. 27:18-23; 34:17; Deut. 1:38; 3:21,28; 31:3,7,14,23; 34:9; Josh. 1

* Two spies sent into Jericho spared from capture by Rahab (Josh. 2)

* Israel allowed to miraculously cross the Jordan River on dry ground; memorial of 12 stones (Josh. 3&4; note 3:14-17; 4:1-9)

* Circumcision of males (ch. 5)

B. Israel Conquers Canaan (Joshua 6-12)

* Conquest of Jericho — (Josh. 6; note 6:1-5,20-23)

* Sin of Achan & defeat of Ai (Josh. 7&8; note 7:16-26)

* Alliance with Gibeonites (Josh. 9)

* Southern conquest; sun standing still (Josh. 10; note 10:9-13)

* Northern conquest (Josh. 11)

C. Israel Divides Canaan (Joshua 13-24)

* Division of the land among the tribes (Josh. 13-22), including appointing the cities of refuge (ch. 20)

* Joshua's final discourses (Josh. 23,24)

Part 1. Israel Enters Canaan - Joshua 1-5

I. Joshua Appointed to Lead the People – Joshua 1

Command to Joshua to Lead the People – 1:1-9

Verses 1-4

6. What job did God give Joshua?

7. Describe the territory God promised Israel would receive.

Joshua to take Moses' place

Before Moses died, Joshua had been appointed by God to take Moses' place (see references above). After Moses died, God spoke to Joshua and gave him the charge to lead Israel into the land. He promised the whole land to Israel, just as it had been promised to Moses and as far back as Abraham.

The area is here described as extending from the wilderness and Lebanon to the Euphrates River, including all the land of the Hittites, then to the Great Sea (Mediterranean) on the west. Joshua may, at this time, have been standing on an elevated place viewing the land as Moses had done before he died. Lebanon was the area along the Mediterranean directly north of Israel. The Euphrates was further north but to the east from there.

The Hittites lived throughout much of this region. Of the nations who lived in the area, sometimes one or the other is named specifically as though referring to the whole area. Perhaps the Hittites were the dominant tribe at that time west of Jordan. Or perhaps they just stood as representative of all the tribes.

In any case, God's promise is clearly that Israel will eventually control all this territory. They did not control this full extent in Joshua's lifetime. Only in the kingdoms of David and Solomon did Israel control the full extent of territory God predicted.

Verses 5-9

8. What promises did God give Joshua in vv 5-9?

9. What conditions did Joshua have to meet?

10. According to Numbers 13&14, why had Israel failed to enter Canaan the first time?

11. Application: Name 3 lessons we can learn from these verses for our own service to God.

God's promise to be with Joshua

God promised that He would be with Joshua as He had been with Moses. He would not leave nor forsake him. The result would be that no one would be able to stand before him

throughout his whole life – i.e., no one could withstand or successfully oppose him in the work he did for the Lord.

Because of God's protection and provision, Joshua would succeed in bringing Israel into the promised land. God gave him this task and assured him it could be done. This would fulfill the promise to Abraham and the fathers to give this land to them (see notes above).

However, the promise was conditional. There were things Joshua would need to do to be successful. Remember, Israel had attempted to do this once before but failed because of **fear** [Num. 13:31,33; 14:6-9]. So three times God told Joshua to “**be strong and of good courage**” (v6,7,9).

We too face hardship in serving God.

God's people have always had great responsibilities to work for Him. We do not have the same challenges or charge that God gave Joshua. But we do have a charge from God and we will face challenges. We get discouraged and fearful, thinking we cannot succeed. Nothing should be of greater encouragement, when we face these responsibilities, than the assurance that God will help us accomplish them.

Luke 6:22,23; Psalms 27:1-3,14 – We face persecution and opposition from evildoers.

Psalms 46:1,2; 23:4 -- We face tasks of obedience and service that we must accomplish for the Lord. Often we face hardships and difficulties in accomplishing this work: illness, death, family problems, financial hardship, temptation to sin, etc. It takes great courage to face these and continue serving God. [John 14:27; Psa. 49:5; 91:5ff; 112:7,8; Heb. 11:23]

Ephesians 6:19,20; Acts 4:10-13,18-20,29-31 – We are responsible to teach others the gospel. Many oppose these efforts. [Acts 13:46; 9:27,29; 14:3; 18:26; 19:8; 18:9; I Thess. 2:2,4; Gal. 2:12; Phil. 1:14]

As with Joshua, we need encouragement and assurance that we too can succeed in God's work. God gave Joshua three things to help him be successful. These same things give us success in our duties in God's service.

God gave a Goal, and assured Joshua he could reach it – vv 6,8

The goal was to lead the people into the land. God promised Joshua he could definitely achieve this goal. Hope of success in achieving a great goal gives great motivation to be strong and courageous.

Revelation 2:10 — Do not fear persecution, but be faithful till death and you'll receive a crown of life. So a great goal can produce great courage.

Hebrews 11:32-38 — God's people in the Old Testament showed great courage. Why? V16 — They looked for a better country.

Just as Joshua was brave to lead the people into the promised land, so God has offered us the promised land of eternal life, and He has assured us we can successfully reach it. This ought to make us strong and brave.

[2 Chron. 15:7,8; Matt. 10:32,33; Rev.21:8; 2 Cor. 5:6,8; Isa. 35:2-4]

God gave guidance and instruction – vv 7-9

God instructed Joshua what to do and how to do it. He told him to observe the law as revealed by Moses, study it diligently and obey it without moving away from it to the right or to the left. How would this also give us courage and lead to success?

Everyone needs wisdom in order to reach a goal successfully. It is much easier to be brave when you have received proper guidance and instruction.

Jeremiah 1:7-9 — Like Joshua, Jeremiah was afraid to speak for God. God said to be not afraid because he would be speaking God's word. When we know what God's will is, and we really trust that He is always right, this gives us courage and guides us to success.

We often speak of people who act out of the “courage of their convictions.” It is hard to act courageously when we're not sure what is the right thing to do. So if we know what God has

commanded us to do, and we really believe His way is best, this makes us strong and courageous. We are much more likely to be successful.

It follows that sometimes people fail in God's work because of lack of study. If we have the commands, but we don't know what they say, of course we will not succeed.

When we reject God's way, or don't know God's way, sooner or later the result will be fear and failure. If we want courage and success in serving God, we must study His word and be convicted it is best. [Prov. 1:25-33; 3:19-26; I Chron. 22:13; Josh. 23:6-10]

God promised to be with Joshua – vv 5,9

It is much easier to be brave and successful when you have someone strong and wise on your side to help you. Just as God promised to be with Joshua in his physical battles, so He has promised to be with us in our spiritual battles.

Romans 8:31 — If God is for us, who can be against us?

Psalms 23:4 — Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me.

1 Samuel 17:9-11 — Goliath, a ten-foot-tall giant challenged Israel to fight and all Israel was afraid. But David fought him without armor, only a sling and stones. Where did David get the courage? How did he succeed? Vv 36,45,47 — God was on David's side. The battle was the Lord's.

2 Chronicles 32:7,8 — When Assyria besieged Jerusalem, Hezekiah encouraged the people to be strong and of good courage, because God was with them. Why did God's presence give strength? Because of His **power**. All the enemy had was the arm of flesh, but we have Jehovah to help fight for us.

It follows that people often fail in God's work, because we lack faith in God.

Matthew 14:25,28-31 — Jesus came to His apostles walking on the water. Peter began walking to Jesus, but became afraid and began to sink. Why? Lack of faith. Jesus was with him, but he looked at the waves instead of at Jesus. So we lose courage and fail when we look at how great our problems are and take our eyes off how great our God is.

2 Kings 6:14-17 — The Syrian army surrounded Elisha and his servant was afraid. Elisha said to fear not because he had more on his side than the enemy did on theirs. The servant's eyes were opened and he saw the mountain full of horses and fiery chariots defended Elisha.

[Psa. 31:13-15; Matt. 8:23ff; 2 Chron. 15:1-8; Psa. 27:11-14; 31:23f; 46:1,2; Isa. 41:10-13; 43:1-5; Heb. 13:5,6; Josh 23:6-10]

Joshua could be brave and successful in God's work if he kept his eye on the goal, studied and followed God's word diligently, and trusted in God to be with him. We can succeed in our work for God in the same way.

Preparation to Cross the River – 1:10-18

Verses 10,11

12. What instructions were Israel's officers to give to the people?

The people warned to prepare

Having received instructions and encouragement from the Lord, Joshua began to prepare the people to cross the Jordan into Canaan.

He commanded the officers to instruct the people in the camp to prepare provisions (food) and be ready in three days to cross the Jordan and go in to possess the land.

Verses 12-15

13. What tribes had already inherited east of Jordan? Where does the Bible record this?

14. What special command had these tribes received? Why?

Reminder to Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh

Two and one half tribes had received their inheritance already on the east side of Jordan. When Israel had conquered this land, they had found it such good land for raising flocks that they asked to receive their inheritance there.

Moses had agreed on condition that they must agree to leave their families behind and go into Canaan with the other tribes when they went to fight to take the land. After the other tribes had taken their lands, then the 2½ tribes could return to their families and live in the land they had received.

It would not have been fair for all the tribes to have fought for the land these tribes received, if they had then refused to fight to help the other tribes take their territories. The 2½ tribes had agreed to this arrangement. See Num. 32. Here Joshua reminds them of this agreement.

Verses 16-18

15. What commitment did the people make to Joshua (vv 16,17)? (Think: How well had the people kept the commitment to obey Moses?)

16. What would happen to anyone who rebelled against Joshua?

The people's agreement to follow Joshua

Not only did the 2½ tribes agree to keep their word, but they also gave their promise of allegiance to Joshua. They promised to do as he commanded and go where he would send them.

They promised that they would follow him just as they had followed Moses. They expressed their desire for God to be with him as He had been with Moses. And they said anyone who would not follow but rebelled against him would be put to death. In this they encouraged him to be strong even as God had encouraged him.

No doubt this was well intended. However, assurance that they would follow as they had followed Moses would not mean much, frankly. They had not done a very good job of following Moses at times. They had followed him in the battles to capture the area east of Jordan. But they had rebelled time and again throughout their history.

In any case, they clearly here meant to give assurance to Joshua of their intent to fully follow and obey him. This was a good start. If such determination could continue, they would have had a successful labor for the Lord.

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