

Men's Sunday Night
A Study in the Book of Joshua
The Abundant Life
Introduction

Why should anybody today study the Book of Joshua, an ancient book that gives a grim account of war, slaughter, and conquest? If the Book of Joshua were fiction, we might accept it as an exciting adventure story; but the book conveys real history and is a part of inspired Holy Scripture. What does it mean to us today?

“There never was a good war, or a bad peace,” Benjamin Franklin wrote in 1783; but it’s possible that the wise old patriot was wrong for once. After all, God called Joshua to be a general and to lead the army of Israel in holy conquest. But there were bigger issues involved in that conquest than the invasion and possession of a land, issues that touch our lives and our faith today.

That’s why we’re embarking on this study. The Book of Joshua is the book of new beginnings for the people of God, and many believers today need a new beginning. After forty years of wandering in the wilderness, Israel claimed their inheritance and enjoyed the blessings of the land that God had prepared for them. That’s the kind of life God wants us to experience today. Jesus Christ, our Joshua, wants to lead us in conquest now and share with us all the treasures of His wonderful inheritance. He has “blessed us with all spiritual blessings” (Eph. 1:3), but too often we live like defeated paupers.

Whether we like it or not, God’s people are expected to be soldiers. At least Paul thought so: “*You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.*” (2 Tim. 2:3-4).

The Book of Joshua tells us how to be victorious soldiers and how to claim our rich spiritual inheritance in Jesus Christ. It tells us how to be strong and courageous as we face our enemies and march forward to claim new territory for the Lord.

Theme

It has been pointed out before that Canaan is a type of the Christian's inheritance in Christ. Canaan is not a picture of heaven, because the believer does not have to battle to gain his heavenly home. Canaan represents God's inheritance, given to the believer and claimed by faith. The victorious Christian life is a life of battles and blessings, but it is also a life of rest. In Heb. 4-5 we see that the entering of the nation into Canaan is a picture of the believer entering into a life of rest and victory through faith in Christ. Too many Christians are "in between" in their spiritual lives, between Egypt and Canaan. They have been delivered from the bondage of sin, but they have not by faith entered into the inheritance of rest and victory. How to enter and claim this inheritance is the theme of Joshua.

Personality Profile: Joshua

Name means: "The Lord is salvation," practically the same name as Jesus.
Also known as: Hoshea

Home: Timnath Serah, about 17 miles southwest of Shechem, in the mountains of Ephraim

Family: The son of Nun, of the tribe of Ephraim

Occupation: Military commander, Assistant to Moses

Best known today as: The successor to Moses

Joshua the Man

Joshua was born in Egyptian slavery. His father was Nun, of the tribe of Ephraim; we know nothing about his mother. Originally his name was Oshea or Hoshea, which means "*salvation*," but Moses changed it to Jehoshua (or Joshua), which means "*Jehovah is salvation*." He was a slave in Egypt and served as Moses assistant during the journeys of the nation. He also led the army in the battle against Amalek, and was one of the two spies

who had the faith to enter Canaan when the nation rebelled in unbelief. As a result of his faith, he (along with Caleb) was permitted to enter the Promised Land. Jewish tradition says that Joshua was eighty-five years old when he took Moses place at the head of the nation. Joshua 1-12 (the conquest of the land) covers roughly the next seven years; he spent the remainder of his life dividing up the inheritance and ruling the nation. He died at 110. The New Testament makes it clear that Joshua is a type of Christ. The name “Jesus” in Greek is equivalent to “Joshua”; both mean “God’s salvation” or “Jehovah is the Savior.” Just as Joshua conquered earthly foes, so Christ has defeated every enemy through His death and resurrection. It was Joshua, not Moses (representing Law), who brought Israel into Canaan, and it is Jesus who leads us into spiritual rest and victory. As Joshua assigned the tribes their inheritance so Christ has given us our inheritance.

The Defeated Nations

Those who oppose the inspiration of the Bible enjoy attacking the passages in Joshua that tell about war and slaughter. “How can a God of love command such bloodshed?” they ask. Keep in mind that God had given these nations hundreds of years to repent, yet they refused to turn from their filthy ways. If you wish to know what “the doings of Canaan” were, read Lev. 18, and keep in mind that these immoral practices were a part of heathen religious worship! Any sinner in the nation could be saved by faith, and there was adequate warning sent ahead. God sometimes uses war to afflict and even to destroy nations that forget Him. God had these wicked nations destroyed to punish them for their sins and, something like a doctor who disinfects his instruments to kill the germs, to protect His people from their evil ways.

The Book of Joshua tells about the Israelites taking possession of Canaan, known as the Promised Land. God told the Israelites to drive out or destroy the tribes already living in the land, known as the Canaanites. The Canaanites had a fairly advanced culture, organized into city and states. They were among the most active merchants and traders in the ancient Middle East. But they stood under the judgment of God because of their idolatrous religious practices, which the Lord condemned as abominations. The Israelite invasion was God’s means of judging these pagan tribes.

The leader of Israel during this period of conquest was Joshua. He was born in Egypt but left with the rest of his people at the time of the exodus.

Apparently it did not take Moses long to recognize Joshua's leadership potential, because shortly after leaving Egypt he selected Joshua to act as Israel's general in a battle against the Amalekites. Later, Joshua became Moses personal assistant, and ultimately his successor.

The campaign to capture Canaan was a personal victory for Joshua. At Kadesh Barnea, he and Caleb had stood against ten other spies who had been sent to spy out the land. The ten had reported that Canaan was impossible to capture. But Joshua and Caleb insisted that with the Lord's help, the people could possess it. Soon after, God said that because of their faith, Joshua and Caleb would be the only adults to enter the promised land

Key Figures in the Book of Joshua

Joshua (1:1) Moses successor was a superb general whose wise leadership and courageous faith enabled the Israelites to start taking possession of Canaan, which God had promised to give them.

Rahab (2:1) This Canaanite prostitute exercised faith in Israel's God by aiding Israelite spies who came to her well-defended city of Jericho.

Achan (7:19) One man's greed led to willful disobedience that cost the lives of 36 warriors.

Caleb (14:6) Even at 85 years of age, stouthearted Caleb was eager to take on a tribe of giants who lived at Hebron.

Phinehas (22:13) Faithful to the last, Aaron's grandson Phinehas was called upon to resolve a dispute between the tribes.