

Old Testament Overview

Joshua

In the past few months, we have discussed the first five books of the Bible

- Torah
- The Book of Moses
- The Law

We will continue to build upon the foundation of those books as we continue our study of the Old Testament

But this afternoon, we will be starting our study of the twelve historical books of the OT

- Joshua-Esther

My goal this afternoon is to cover three books

- Joshua
- Judges
- Ruth

Let's pray and get started¹

We will start looking at the twelve historical books this afternoon

- If we look at the beginning and end of these historical books, there is some irony and symmetry to them²

We begin with Joshua where Israel enters and possesses the Promised Land

- This is after a 430-year period of slavery in Egypt

These historical books end with Israel returning to the Promised Land after exile

- This time, however, they don't possess the Land

We could outline these twelve books in at least two different ways

- One is based on the perspective of kingship
- The other is based on the perspective of exile

¹ This lesson references material from Capitol Hill Baptist Church's core seminar on the Old Testament. <http://www.capitolhillbaptist.org/resources/core-seminars/series/old-testament-overview/>

² John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary*, 246.

Pre-kingship	Kingship	Post-kingship
Joshua Judges Ruth	1 & 2 Samuel 1 & 2 Kings 1 & 2 Chronicles	Ezra Nehemiah Esther

Pre-exile	Exile	Post-exile
Joshua Judges Ruth 1 & 2 Samuel 1 & 2 Kings 1 & 2 Chronicles	Esther	Ezra Nehemiah

Try and keep this big picture in mind as we continue to study the rest of the OT

- This is much more difficult because our English OT is organized topically vs. chronologically

Joshua

Thus far, the children of Israel have been led up to the Promised Land

- In the book of Joshua, Israel will go into the Promised Land

Joshua's name is meaningful

- Consider this passage in Numbers 13, "**These are the names of the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land; but Moses called Hoshea the son of Nun, Joshua.**" (13:16)
 - o "**Hoshea**" – his original name meaning, "salvation"
 - o "**Joshua**" – his new name meaning, "the LORD is my salvation"

Joshua's name is the Hebrew equivalent of the Greek name for "Jesus"

- They both were deliverers in their own right

The book of Joshua focuses on the fact that God is their salvation

- The human leader simply reminds the nation of Israel that God, not man, is in control

Joshua had a number of different ministries during his lifetime

- He was Moses' assistant
- He was one of the 12 spies
- He is now Moses' successor

Moses had instructed Joshua to be "**strong and courageous**" (Deut 31:7)

- God told him the same thing when He commissioned him (Deut 31:23)
- Three times God tells Joshua these same words in Joshua 1 (1:6, 7, 9)
- Then the people of Israel tell Joshua these same words in Joshua 1:18

The Lord told Joshua in 1:8, “This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success”

- Joshua was to remember and meditate on the Law day and night
- He was to obey the Law
- This would be the pathway to success

What are some common themes that appear in this book?

1. The Promised Land

Obviously, the Promised Land will play a large part in this book

- It is part of the Abrahamic Covenant that was promised by God to the nation of Israel
- *It was not contingent or dependent upon Israel's faithfulness*

God had promised this land to Israel back in the book of Genesis

- It was part of the unconditional Abrahamic Covenant

But this does not discount the importance of Israel's obedience

- If Israel was obedient, there would have victory
- If Israel was disobedient, there would suffer defeat

There were several reasons why God intended for Israel to possess the Promised Land³

- To keep His promise that He made to Abram back in Genesis 12:7
- To set the stage for later developments with His kingdom plan (cf. Gen 49:8-12)
- To punish the people who were an affront to Him because of their sinfulness (Lev 18:25)
- To be a testimony to other peoples (Josh 2:9-11)

2. Obedience and disobedience

Israel will also learn that victory comes through faith in God and obedience to His Word

- Not through military might or sheer numbers

There were great times of obedience

- They obeyed the LORD in crossing the Jordan on dry ground (2:16)
- They were obedient to the LORD when He commanded them to be circumcised (5:2)
- Even in the conquest of the city of Jericho, in which some very strange commands were given, Israel obeyed the LORD (6:1-21)
- After their defeat of the little city of Ai, Israel was obedient to the LORD in gaining victory over it (8:3-29)
- Many other battles were won due to the obedience of Israel (10:29-12:24)

³ Ibid., 256.

- During the allotment of the cities of refuge and the cities of the Levites, the people were obedient (chpts 20-21)

But there were also times of disobedience

- Very early in the book of Joshua, Israel became proud in heart in dealing with the little city of Ai. Only three thousand men were sent; however, these men were routed by the inhabitants of Ai (7:4-5)
- Achan was stoned for taking some of the plunder from the battle (7:26)
- Israel was also tricked in relation to the Gibeonites (9:1, 6). Joshua made a covenant with these people to let them live (9:15)
- The sons of Rueben, the sons of Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh were almost destroyed due to a misinterpretation of their altar (22:10-12)

3. War

Israel would fight in many battles and wars in the book of Joshua

- They had to engage in conflict with the people who inhabited Canaan

So an overall purpose of the book of Joshua is:

- **Yahweh gave the Promised Land to Israel through holy war to fulfill the Abrahamic Covenant**

It was God's power that enabled them to take possession of the Land

- However, Israel needed to maintain trust in God through obedience
- Disobedience was not a trust in God, but a trust in oneself

One unique thing about the book of Joshua is the fact that there are no massive failures by Israel or her leadership

- The sin of Achan was quickly resolved
- Look at Joshua 24:31, "And 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."

In this book, God requires Israel to attempt the impossible

- The only way for them to have victory and triumph was for them to trust and to obey

Israel was allowed to witness a few miracles along the way

- Water held back (3:13)
- Walls of Jericho fell (6:20)
- Hailstones from heaven (10:11)
- Sun stands still (10:12-13)

If you struggled with reading Numbers and Deuteronomy, I think you will find these books to be easier to read

- There is much more action, plot, and movement
- These stories are really interesting from a historical perspective

Joshua can be broken down into two major divisions

- Conquering the Land (1-12)
- Dividing the Land (13-24)

I. Conquering the Land (1-12)

Chapter 1 discusses how God commissioned Joshua for the task of leading Israel

- Some of this is a repeat from what we have already seen in the book of Deuteronomy

1:2, "Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel."

- Some very encouraging and comforting words are given to Joshua by the LORD, "No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. ⁶ "Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. ⁷ "Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. ⁸ "This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success. ⁹ "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.'" (1:5-9)

Let's look at how the people respond to Joshua's commissioning by the LORD

- Look at verse 17, "Just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you"

If you were Joshua, how would you take that statement?

- Had Israel obeyed Moses "in all things"?

Israel was obviously forgetting the multiple instances of rebellion, complaining, murmuring, and disobedience that characterized them during their time under Moses

Chapter 2 finds Israel sending out spies again

- This takes us back to the account in Numbers 14
- The majority of the spies gave a bad report to the people

This time, however, the spies encourage the people with their report

- Look with me at 2:24, “Surely the LORD has given all the land into our hands; moreover, all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before us.”

Before, the bad report discouraged faith in the hearts of the people

- Now, the good report encouraged faith

This account of Rahab has confused many

- Why would the spies stay at the home of a prostitute?
- Why would God seem to bless the Rahab’s lies about the spies?

If I was teaching through this lesson in a Bible study, I would spend more time here

- But let me give you the short version
- I would encourage you to study this in more detail if you are interested

We aren’t told exactly why these two spies went to the house of a harlot

- We can say with confidence that it was not for sinful purposes

There may have been very good reasons for the spies to stay at her home⁴

- They would not have been noticed being at her house
- Her home was on a city wall (2:15), so they would have had an exit plan

But there is a spiritual reason why God wanted these spies to stay with her

- God was going to show grace to this woman, sparing her from the destruction of the city

What about her lie?

- God doesn’t bless Rahab’s lie
- God blesses Rahab’s faith

Rahab has heard of Israel’s God

- Let’s read 2:9-11
- “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. 10 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. 11 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”

Hebrews 11, the great hall of faith, mentions Rahab for her faith (Heb 11:31)

- She clearly sinned by lying
- Yet He honors true faith, as small as it may be

⁴ Ibid., 258.

Chapter 3 records the crossing of the Jordan River

- The entire army needed to cross this body of water

Instead of using conventional means to cross this body of water, the Lord has different plans

- He would have Israel cross the Jordan River...on dry land

The priests would carry the ark of the covenant

- When the soles of the feet of the priests touched the Jordan river, the water would stop flowing and would divide for Israel to cross over

If this sounds familiar, that's because this is similar to how God allowed the Israelites to cross the Red Sea on dry land

- Of course, they didn't have priests or the ark of the covenant at that time

In chapter 4, the Lord has Joshua command that this place be remembered for future generations

- Stones from the Jordan River were collected and put where the priests stood (4:9)
- In future generations, the Israelites would teach their children about this event, showing them the very stones that were positioned there

Chapter 5 has a few elements that I want to highlight

Let's read Joshua 5:1, "Now it came about when all the kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan to the west, and all the kings of the Canaanites who were by the sea, heard how the LORD had dried up the waters of the Jordan before the sons of Israel until they had crossed, that their hearts melted, and there was no spirit in them any longer because of the sons of Israel."

- The nations had heard what the Lord did with the Jordan River

God was beginning to put the fear of Himself into the hearts of these other nations

- God would use that in the future, especially as His people were possessing the land

We are told in 5:2 that the Israelites were circumcised "the second time"

- Joshua 5:5 tells us that the men born in the wilderness had not been circumcised

We also remind ourselves of God's provision for Israel

- As they begin to eat from the land of Canaan, God stops providing manna (5:12)

God had been steadily and faithfully providing manna for them since Exodus 16:31

- That's a period of over 40 years!

Toward the end of Joshua 5, we read of an encounter that Joshua has with "a man...with his sword in his hand"

- This man identifies Himself as "the captain of the host of the Lord"

Furthermore, He tells Joshua to remove his sandals, because the place where he was standing was holy (5:15)

- If you remember, this is similar language to when the Lord appeared to Moses at the burning bush

Many commentators believe that this was a theophany

- An appearance of Christ before His Incarnation

What a visual picture for Joshua to see

- This Captain of the Lord's armies stands with His sword drawn
- God would be fighting for His people!

Chapter 6 re-introduces us to the city of Jericho

- This was where the spies had been sent back in chapter 2

Once again, God uses very unconventional means

- To defeat the mighty city of Jericho, there would be no swords needed
- Only some priests, trumpets, and loud voices

For six days, the people followed the priests walked around the city with the ark of the covenant

- We are told that armed men went before the priests and behind the priests
- We are also told that the trumpets were blown (6:13)

Can you imagine doing this?

- Six days is a long time to walk around a city, following the ark of the covenant, and hearing the trumpets
- This had to be a bit embarrassing, right?

But God was teaching Joshua and Israel to trust Him

- Even when it doesn't make sense

On the seventh day, however, things changed

- They marched around the city seven times
- When the trumpet sounded, Joshua told the people to shout

We are told that when the people shouted, the walls of Jericho fell down (6:20)⁵

- The outer wall of Jericho was 6 feet thick
- The inner wall was 12 feet thick

Clearly, this was a way in which only the Lord could take the credit for the victory

- There's no way that merely shouting could bring down the walls of Jericho

⁵ Ibid., 260.

Joshua had told Israel about the spoils of victory before the walls came down

- The silver, gold, bronze, and iron were holy to the Lord; they were to go to the treasury of the Lord
- There were other things that were banned from being taken

Joshua remembers his promise to Rahab and to her family

- They are spared (6:22-25)

Chapter 7 introduces us to the sin of Achan

- Israel had just witnessed a huge victory over the city of Jericho

Achan had taken some things that were under the ban

- His sin affected not only himself, but also his family and his nation

In the early part of the chapter, Joshua didn't know about Achan's sin

- He sends out spies to the city of Ai
- The spies come back saying that only 2000-3000 men should go up to the city

These men go to Ai, but they are routed

- God allowed Israel to suffer defeat

God tells Joshua about Achan's sin (7:11)

- The next day, somehow the Lord points out Achan as the guilty party (7:18)

Achan comes clean about his sin (7:20-21)

- He tells Joshua what he took
- He tells Joshua where the items are

Achan is brought out, along with his family, all that belonged to him, and the items that were under the ban

- The Israelites stoned them
- Then they burn them with fire (7:25)

A few points of application for us to think about from this chapter

- Obedience in little things is just as important as in big things. Israel had just witnessed a tremendous victory at Jericho; however, Achan sinned by taking things from the ban.
- Don't trust in your own resources, but trust in the Lord. Israel had a strong army, and they were fresh off a victory. But God allowed a small city like Ai to defeat them because of their sin!

Chapter 8 is a bit of a lesson in humility for Israel

- God tells Joshua to send all of Israel's army to Ai
- God promises victory to Israel
- Once again, God gives directions about what is allowed and not allowed as spoils of war (8:2)

This time, Israel obeys the Lord

- They setup an ambush and defeat the people of Ai

Chapter 9 records how the people of Gibeon lied and deceived their way into a covenant with Israel

When they approached Israel, they made it seem like they had traveled a long distance (9:3-5)

- Took worn-out sacks
- Took worn-out wineskins
- Took worn-out sandals and clothes
- Took dry bread

The key verse in this chapter is 9:14, **"So the men of Israel took some of their provisions, and did not ask for the counsel of the LORD"**

After three days, Israel made a covenant with the Gibeonites (9:16)

- God had told Israel to destroy all the peoples who lived in Canaan (Deuteronomy 7:1-2)
- Furthermore, they were told in that passage not to make a covenant with them, either

Even though the Israelites made a covenant with the people of Gibeon, Joshua made them do the hard work of hewing wood and drawing water (9:21)

Chapter 10 chronicles how the Gibeonites were being targeted by five other kings

- These kings waged war against Gibeon

When Gibeon hears of this, they appeal to Joshua for help

- After all, they are in a covenant together

The Lord assures Joshua to go and fight

- He would give the victory into the hands of the Israelites

Look at Joshua 10:10 and notice the subject of the verbs

- It is the Lord who confounded these armies
- It is the Lord who slew them
- It is the Lord who pursued them away from that area
- In verse 11, it is the Lord who threw large hailstones at these armies (more died from the hailstones than the sword)

Joshua then asks that the sun stand still and the moon not to orbit (10:12)

- God allows a miracle to take place so that the Israelites could bring about a total victory

The rest of chapter 10, along with chapters 11 and 12, deal with various conquests on the part of Israel

- I won't cover these in great detail this afternoon

We have seen in chapters 1-12 the conquering of the land

- God Himself is fighting for Israel as they obey
- But He will also withhold His blessings when Israel disobeys

II. Dividing the Land (13-24)

I won't be going into as much detail in the second half of this book as I did with the first half

Much of the second half of this book deals with the dividing of the land among the tribes of Israel

- That can happen now that they have conquered various lands

Cities of refuge are setup in chapter 20

- This was outlined in the book of Numbers

As you may remember, these cities were established so that non-intentional murderers could have a place to flee

Chapter 21 deals with the distribution of Levites throughout the land

- Remember, the Levites were not to receive an inheritance among the land (Num 18:23; Deut 12:12)
- But Israel was told to allow the Levites land to pasture (Num 35:2)

What might be a practical benefit of allowing the Levites to be scattered among the land of Canaan?⁶

- It allowed the Levites to minister spiritually to all the tribes
- This wouldn't be as easy if they were all together in one geographical location

Look with me at Numbers 21:43

- This is an amazing summary of God's faithfulness to this point
- "So the LORD gave Israel all the land which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they possessed it and lived in it. ⁴⁴ And the LORD gave them rest on every side, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers, and no one of all their enemies stood before them; the LORD gave all their enemies into their hand. ⁴⁵ Not one of the good

⁶ Ibid., 268.

promises which the LORD had made to the house of Israel failed; all came to pass.”
(21:43-45)

Chapter 22 records how Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh were allowed to go back home

- Remember, they wanted to settle east of the Jordan

Joshua charged them to obey the Law of Moses and be obedient (22:5)

When these 2½ tribes return home, they build a large altar (22:10)

- And the other tribes hear about it

Furthermore, these 9½ tribes gathered themselves to go to war (22:12)

- They accuse them of turning away from following the Lord (22:16)
- They even remind these 2½ tribes of past sins which brought the Lord’s discipline

The 2½ tribes have an opportunity to speak in 22:22

- They are still worshipping the Lord God
- They affirm that the altar is not for burnt offering or sacrifice (22:26)
- With the Jordan River dividing the twelve tribes, the 2½ on the east side of the Jordan wanted a way to remember the Lord

Chapter 23 is Joshua’s charge to Israel to be faithful to the Lord

- Joshua is old by this point, and God had given Israel rest from its enemies (23:1)

He encourages the people to obey

- He warns the people about disobedience
- He warns the people against intermarriage with other nations (23:12-13)

Look with me at Joshua 23:14, “not one word of all the good words which the LORD your God spoke concerning you has failed; all have been fulfilled for you, not one of them has failed”

- God has been faithful to His people
- He has been faithful to His own promises

The last chapter of Joshua is a review of Israel’s history

- Repetition is a great teacher, isn’t it?

This is Joshua’s farewell address

- He continues his message of encouragement, admonition, and warning

Many of you are familiar with Joshua 24:15, “And if it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”

Joshua dies at the age of 110 years old (24:29)

Now that Israel is settled in the Promised Land, one more promise can be fulfilled

- Back in Genesis 50, Joseph had asked that his bones be carried and buried in the Promised Land (Gen 50:24-25)
- So Israel buried Joseph's bones (Joshua 50:32)

This book isn't about Joshua the human leader

- The book of Joshua is primarily about God and His might
- God is the One who fought for Israel

The next book is Judges

- We will discuss that one after the break