

Overview of Joshua

- I. **Intro: Genesis 17:4-9:** God makes a covenant with Abraham and promises that from Abraham a great nation would come (shocking given Sarah's barrenness), which means that God will give Abraham
 - a. *Children* (Numbers 1:46): Over 600,000 men who were able to serve in the army. When women, children and men under 20 and over 60 are included, the total population would be around 2 million.
 - b. *Law* (Deuteronomy): The whole Law is really about loving the Lord with everything we have (heart, soul, and strength).
 - c. *Land* (Numbers 13 & 14; Joshua): They get right up to the Promise Land and they rebel against the Lord and against Moses and Aaron.
- II. **Nature of Old Testament Historical Books** (Adapted from *Introduction to the Historical Books*.) The twelve books after the Pentateuch are historical books, telling the story of
 - i. Israel's entry into the Promised Land of Canaan under Joshua;
 - ii. Israel's life in the land under the judges and the transition to kingship;
 - iii. The division of the nation into two rival kingdoms (Israel & Judah) and life in both;
 - iv. The downfall and exile of each kingdom;
 - v. Life in the exile;
 - vi. Judah's return from exile...and together these books span close to 1000 years of history, and therefore it shouldn't surprise you to know that there's many ups and downs, many twists and turns, yet through it, God is seen as completely sovereign and faithful to His people.
- III. **The Book of Joshua**
 - a. Records the 50 years from the death of Moses, in roughly 15th century BC to the death of Joshua.
 - b. Records in graphic detail the story of Israel's conquest of Canaan.
 - c. Records the story of how God fulfilled His promises to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses.

- IV. Israel's new leader is commissioned: Profile of Joshua (1:1-1:9)**
- a. *He served under Moses*-(Exodus 17:9-14)
 - b. *He served alongside Moses*-(Exodus 24:12-13; Exodus 33:11)
 - c. *He ultimately succeeded Moses*-(Numbers 27:12-23)
- V. Israel Crosses into the Land (1:10-5:15)**
- a. Crossing the Jordan (ch. 3)--The Lord leads Israel under Joshua's leadership in the same way He did under Moses' leadership.
 - b. Stones of remembrance (ch. 4)—The Lord instructs Israel to gather and leave behind physical reminders of God's faithfulness. *What physical reminders are you leaving behind for your offspring to remember the Lord's faithfulness in your life?*
 - c. The Lord reinstates the covenant sign and covenant meal (ch. 5).
- VI. Israel Takes the Land (6:1-12:24)**
- a. Jericho account (ch. 6)-- What Israel learned, and what every Christian is in the process of learning is that the clearest expression of faith is not pomp, or sacrifice but radical obedience to the Lord even when we don't have a clear understanding of how it's going to work out.
 - b. Achan's sin and the Lord's discipline (ch. 7).
 - c. Ai Destroyed (ch. 8).
 - d. Southern Conquest (ch. 9 &10).
 - e. Northern Conquest (ch.11).
- VII. Israel Divides the Land (13:1-21:45)**
- a. One commentator sums it up this way, "At this moment Israel does indeed become a new creation, a slave becomes an heir, a helpless child becomes a mature inheritor." The fulfillment has finally come...the land that was promised to Abraham, the land that Moses yearned to take possession of, had now been given to Israel by the Lord!
 - b. At every point along Israel's history the Lord was completely faithful to His promises. "Not one of all the Lord's good promises to the house of Israel failed; every one was fulfilled" (Josh. 21:45).

VIII. Israel Serves the Lord in the Land (22:1-24:33)

- a. Truly One nation under God...for a short time (ch. 22).
- b. Joshua's Call to Faithfulness (ch. 23)
- c. Covenant Renewal (ch. 24)

IX. How do we bear witness of the Lord in the strategic spots that He's assigned to us? 3 ways.

- a. Through obedience, not understanding necessarily.
 - i. More often than not in the Christian life, obedience precedes understanding.
 - ii. If you're waiting to move forward in obedience until you have absolute understanding or clarity with a particular situation, you'll be waiting a really long time and your discipleship will be stalled.
 - iii. *In what area of your life do you need to stop seeking perfect understanding and move forward in obedience, trusting God will lead the way?*
- b. Through effort, not idleness.
 - i. These guys worked hard and they took major risks...bearing witness of Christ doesn't happen through idleness but through effort, sacrifice and risk.
 - ii. *When was the last time I took a significant risk for the cause of Christ?*
 - iii. The effort, risk and sacrifice isn't to earn righteousness, but rather it's a response to the costly grace that Christ has bestowed upon you because it was His effort, risk and sacrifice that secured your salvation.
- c. Through the Greater Joshua, not Moses (Hebrews 3:1-6).
 - i. Jesus is the Greek translation of Joshua. Jesus is the True and Greater Joshua who
 1. *Is appointed by God the Father (Heb. 3:2);*
 2. *To lead God's people forward into real rest (Heb. 4:8-11);*
 3. *Through His sacrifice on the Cross—Which truly enables you to stop striving to prove yourself and completely rest in Christ's finished work on your behalf.*

X. Special Concern: The Christian conundrum with the destruction of Canaan

(Taken from *The Drama of Scripture*, Craig G. Bartholomew & Michael W. Goheen)

Joshua presents difficulties for the modern reader. Indeed, how we decide to approach the book of Joshua will have important implications for how we tell the whole story of the Bible. Even among Christians who do read the Bible as a story, some see Jesus' teachings as standing in radical contradiction to certain concepts illustrated in the "holy war" of the book of Joshua. Many modern readers find the wholesale destruction of Canaanites particularly hard to accept, counting it as too much at odds with our contemporary morality. One cannot resolve this difficulty entirely, but there are several clues within the story line of the Bible that may help us to understand God's instructions to His people in the time of Joshua.

We have already recognized that God patiently waits until the evil in the land of Canaan has grown to a point at which He is compelled to judge its people (Gen. 15:16). In Deuteronomy 20:15-18 the command to destroy the inhabitants of the land is motivated further by the danger that the Israelites might succumb to idolatry. Above all else, Israel is to be characterized by the worship of the LORD alone (the first commandment). And if the Israelites live among the Canaanites, they are in danger of being lured into the worship of other "gods." "It is thus in the context of the whole struggle with heathenism that we are to see this terrible call to drive out the heathen nations. (The Book of Joshua) is the story of a group of people, few in number and almost unbelievably weak and fickle in their spiritual loyalties, battling against mighty forces which were degrading, seductive and ruthless." Today it is hard for us to take idolatry and its dangers this seriously. But a key to understanding the command to clear Canaan of the Canaanites is to recall God's holiness and to be reminded of just how much is at stake in the Israelites' remaining faithful to the LORD.