

Bible Study Course

Joshua

Introduction

Joshua is the first book in the second section of the Bible called in the Hebrew Canon “The Prophets,” and in the Greek “The Historical Books.” The Prophets were subdivided into two – “The Former Prophets” and “The Latter Prophets.” “The Former Prophets” comprise four books – Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings, and “The Latter Prophets” also comprise four books – Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and “The Twelve.” “The Historical Books” comprises 12 books, Joshua to Esther, and cover approximately 1000 years of history.

We see in this period of history three great phases: -

- i. Moses to Samuel
- ii. Samuel to the division of the Kingdom into Judea and Israel
- iii. The division of the Kingdom to Malachi

We need also to remember: -

- a) The Pentateuch is the foundation. The Historical section is the building, founded upon the principles laid down in the Pentateuch. Indeed all those principles are illustrated positively or negatively in this section.
- b) There is, of course, also much history in the Pentateuch, and we must not take the title “historical books” as if this is the only history in the Old Testament. It is a somewhat loose title. In many ways the Hebrew title “The Prophets” comes much nearer to the heart of the matter. It is not the history as we know generally. For instance, much is excluded, and much included according to the aim. Once again, the aim governs the scope. It is, in fact, history but it is history prophetically interpreted. It is history from God’s standpoint, as and how it affects and realizes divine ends.
- c) It is worth noting that the connection between the Pentateuch and Joshua is particularly strong.

Authorship and Date

It would seem, in many parts of the book, that “Joshua” was written by an eye-witness or by someone living near to that time – e.g. “we,” “us,” etc., and “unto this day.” Joshua 4:9; 5:1, 6, 9; 6:25; 7:26; 8:28-29; 9:27; 10:27; 15:63; etc

The Talmud asserts that Joshua was the author of Deuteronomy 34: 5-12 as well as the Book of Joshua. The one piece of internal evidence is Joshua 24:26. On the whole Jewish tradition therefore accepts the authorship of Joshua himself, with additions and editing by later scribes. Some scholars think that “Joshua” in its present form was the work of Samuel. Whoever it was, the main body of the book must have been written very shortly after the main events described, if not during them. It appears, therefore, that there is much to support the view that if Joshua did not write this book, he certainly supplied the material for it.

The book covers a period of 25 years and can be dated approximately 1400BC although there is controversy over this date.

The man Joshua was an Ephraimite (1 Chronicles 7:27), his original name being Hoshea (Jesus = The Lord is Salvation). He led the army against Amalek (Exodus 17:10) and was Moses’ personal attendant (Exodus 24:13; 33:11). He was one of the twelve spies (Numbers 14:6-9, 30, 38). Josephus says that Joshua was 85 years of age when he succeeded Moses, and we know that he died at the age of 110 years (Josh 24:29). His name appears in the Tel El Amarna Tablets, 614BC. He has been favourably compared with the greatest military commanders of history.

Key to the Book

The key is undoubtedly the word “inherit” or “inheritance.” It is used approximately 58 times.

In Joshua, we find ourselves having moved from redemption and God's dwelling place, to our inheritance, although all of these are intimately and progressively linked together. Everywhere we turn in this book, we are led to the matter of "inheritance."

Thus we ought to note that the word "possess" is frequently used. Our inheritance has to be possessed. Another factor we ought to note is that there is a very big element of conflict associated with possessing. Indeed, "inheriting" is always linked in the Bible with "overcoming." This is Joshua.

Outline of the Book

Note the importance of men in God's economy – e.g. Abraham, Moses, etc. God's work is supremely "men". He is not interested in "things" but in "people". We see this in the man Joshua. This book dealing with one of the great moves forward in God's plan begins with Joshua's call and commission and ends with his home call. We must never lose sight of this tremendous truth.

In Joshua we find a clear three-fold division:-

- I. The Conquest of the Land 1-12
- II. The Division of the Inheritance 13-22
- III. The Farewell of Joshua 23-24

I. The Conquest of the Land

- a) The preparation for the conquest 1-5
 - i. The need to possess. 1:3, 5, 6, 11 What has been given and provided, must be possessed
 - ii. The need to count the cost, chapter 2. The spies had to face the realities in faith. (Note also "3 days" – Calvary. 1:11; 2:16; 3:2) There is a cost to overcoming. Our Saviour has paid it, but we must also lay down our lives.
 - iii. The need of faith and obedience. Note the Jordan was in full harvest flood tide. Naturally impossible to pass. Rahab is also a most remarkable example of this.
 - iv. The fundamental need of the cross 3-5
 - a. Jordan and the Red Sea. Christ's death for us – Red Sea; Christ death as us – Jordan.
 - b. The memorial stones. 12 buried in the river; 12 set up on the bank of Promised Land. Note – the water cut off at Adam. 3:16. The old Adam is crucified with Christ.
 - c. Circumcision
 - d. Gilgal – "Rolling", "wheel" 5:9
 - e. The Passover
 - v. The need of the leadership of Christ by the Holy Spirit. 5:13-15. Joshua (Jesus) is a type of Christ, and the Captain of the Lord's host, a type of the Holy Spirit. Note also the "Ark" etc. there is no other way of knowing the Lordship of Christ but by the Spirit.

b) The possession of the Land 6-12

Joshua has been called a brilliant general. The Land was divided into quite a number of petty kingdoms, not at all united, except against common invasion. Joshua did not attack the South (it was well fortified), nor did he attack from the North (this would have united all against him). He attacked across the Jordan when it was in harvest floodtide, thus splitting the country in two. Jericho and Ai were absolutely essential to victory, as they dominated the passages into the land.

- i. The Central Campaign 6-8
 - a. Jericho, 6. Note – the timing, the perseverance, faith, praise and "souls of their feet"
 - b. Achan's sin, 7. Note – things taken, stolen, deceitfully hidden; it had to be judged and put away.

- c. Ai, 8:1-29. Note – sin had to be dealt with before victory; all the people had to be involved.
 - d. The Altar built 8:30-35. Christ’s work on the Cross is the basis for all overcoming.
 - ii. The Southern campaign 9-10
 - a. The alliance of the Canaanite tribes 9:1-2. Note – the alliance of evil directed against the people of God possessing their possessions.
 - b. The cleverness of the Gibeonites 9:3-27. Note – Satanic devices in the matter of overcoming. Once confessed, God turned the tables on Satan.
 - c. The defeat of the five kings. 10:1-28. Note – the need of executive action, “feet on their necks”
 - d. The conquest of the rest of the South 10:29-43
 - iii. The Northern campaign 11
 - All was taken by faith. Note what Joshua did not overcome 11: 13, 22
 - iv. Summary of the whole 12
- II. The Division of the Inheritance 13-22
- a) Introduction and the 2 ½ tribes’ inheritance 13
 - b) Judah’s inheritance 14-15
 - Note:-
 - 1. Caleb’s inheritance – Hebron 14:1-15
 - 2. The part played by Othniel 15:13-19
 - c) Joseph’s inheritance 16-17
 - d) The seven remaining tribes 18-19
 - Note – how faithfully the chronicler mentions whether they fully drove out the enemy or not 15:63, 16:10; 17:12, 13 cf. 18
 - e) Refuge cities and Levitical cities 20:21
 - Note:-
 - 1. Cities of refuge 20
 - 2. Levitical cities 21. 48 cities in all, including 6 cities of refuge and 13 priestly cities
 - 3. The Levites’ portion throughout this book, e.g. 13:14, 33; 14:3-4; 18:7
 - f) Warning to the 2 ½ tribes 22
 - 1. Their position on the fringe. This is always dangerous.
 - 2. The Altar – Christ crucified, our oneness, our unifying bond.
- III. The Farewell of Joshua 23-24
- a) The farewell 23:1-24:15
 - b) The renewal of the Covenant 24:16-28
 - c) The death of Joshua 24:29-31
 - d) The burial of Joseph’s bones and Eleazer, Aaron’s son. 24:29-33

Message of the Book

In many vital ways, Joshua is the consummation of Exodus. Our Redemption has two sides, “out of... into,” Exodus 6:6-8. The believer is brought out of “Egypt” by faith in the Blood of the Lamb, and he is brought into “the Promised Land,” by the power of the Holy Spirit. The finished work of Christ is sufficient to bring us out of one world or realm, and into the new. Nevertheless, to possess what God has so freely given us we need to know the Cross and the Spirit is our experience. “Moses My Servant is dead...” The Law can never bring us into the fullness of Christ, but in the book of Joshua we are shown the principles by which the spiritual inheritance is possessed.

Note then the following principles:-

1. Our inheritance will not just come to us. It must be possessed by faith and obedience
2. We can settle at any given point and that will be the measure of our inheriting.
3. Conflict is involved, not only in the possessing of our inheritance, but in a heavenly position.
4. Three things are essential:-

- i. An absolute utterness
 - ii. A deep working of the Cross
 - iii. The headship of the Holy Spirit
5. The Lord alone is able to cause us to inherit. His Word is continually, “I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. Be strong and of good courage... Be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed, for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goes” (Josh 1:5, 6, 9.) We are well able to possess our inheritance because the Lord is with us.

Recommended books

Joshua, Judges

Gleanings in Joshua

Joshua & the Land of Promise

Israel in Canaan under Joshua & the Judges

John Garstang

A.W. Pink

F.B. Meyer

A. Edersheim

Halford House Tapes

BS 3

Joshua

Questions

1. What are the key words in the book of Joshua?
2. Describe three outstanding miracles recorded in Joshua. What spiritual application can you find for the Christian life today?
3. Give the names of two outstanding examples of faith in Joshua, apart from Joshua himself.
4. Give two examples of warnings given to us in Joshua.
5. What is the greatest warning given to us in Chapter 9?
6. Why is there so much mention of “conflict” in the book?
7. Give examples of “absolute utterness” found in these chapters. 8:10, 14, 22, 24
8. What is so special about the Levites’ inheritance?
9. What examples of the Cross can you find in Chapters 3-5?
10. Read chapters 23, 24 State briefly what you learn about the faithfulness and power of God from these chapters.
11. What do you learn about the attitude of the 2 ½ tribes to the eternal purpose of God in their choice of an inheritance (13:8-32, Numbers 32)?
12. What have you learned about the Holy Spirit from the Book of Joshua?