

Joshua 1:1-2

In the book of Joshua, promises take centre stage. God had promised Abraham the land of Canaan as a possession for his offspring (**Gen 15:17-21**).

For four centuries Israel had possessed the promises to Abraham regarding the land, but year after year the promise had gone unrealized. Now as they were poised on the Eastern shores of the Jordan River, the conquest of Canaan still looked impossible. The answer to that dilemma unfolds in the book of Joshua

Summary

The book of Joshua is more than a mere recounting of the major events of the Israelite conquest of Canaan; it is a word from God, as well as a word about God, who not only fulfilled His land promises to ancient Israel through Joshua but who also keeps and fulfills His promises of salvation and of new heavens and a new earth through the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. Historical Background and Context

The opening words of the book focus on Joshua and his place Israel's history. They indicate a major shift in the leadership of God's people (**Josh 1:1-2a; Deut 34**). Joshua led Israel against impossible odds to achieve some of the greatest military victories recorded in Scripture.

Joshua was also a man of God. The Lord spoke to Joshua after the death of Moses (**Josh 1:1**), but this was not his first encounter with God (**Exod. 24:13; 33:7-11**).

The Spirit of God in-dwelt Joshua (**Num 27:18**) and he was known as a man who followed the LORD wholeheartedly (**Num. 32:12**)

God appointed Joshua to the task of leading His people (**Num 27:18-21**). Later, Moses revealed to the nation that Joshua was to be his successor (**Deut. 31:14b-15**).

Each man was unique his calling had his own gifts to use and tasks to perform.

God does not intend for all of his people to be identical in their abilities and tasks.

2. The Book and Its Message

The book opens with the first of many times that God revealed himself to Israel's new leader (**Josh 1:1**). The subsequent revelations were of various instructions as he prepared and led the people to battle, divided up the land according to the allotments of the twelve tribes and gave his Final instructions, calling on the people of Israel to obey the Lord, to love him, and cling to him with all their hearts.

The book of Joshua can be divided into several major sections.

The first five chapters are all about preparation; spiritual and military.

The next seven chapters (**6-12**) describe the actual conquest of Canaan.

Following the conquest, Joshua saw to it that the tribes of Israel settled in the land that God assigned to them (**Josh 13-19**). In close connection with these records of

allotment are instructions regarding the cities of refuge, their purpose and location (20:1-9), as well as the cities and pasture lands for the Levites (21:1-42) .

The history of conquest concludes with the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of the tribe of Manasseh returning to their lands on the eastern shore of the Jordan (22); Joshua's charge to Israel's leaders (23), and the renewal of the covenant at Shechem (24:1-28). The closing verses recount Joshua's death, the burial of Joseph's bones and the death of Eleazar, the high priest (24:29-33).

The overarching theme of the whole book is God's gift of Canaan to Israel in accordance with his covenant promises (1:1-9; 21:43-45; 23:14) .

In the immediate context of Joshua, God is being faithful to his promises as a means of calling his people to a faithful response to him in return (Josh 24:14-15).

The book's narrative framework: crisis, resolution, and outcome.

The crisis is the land to be conquered and the conflict that ensued.

The resolution is the presence of God to fight for Israel and give them the land.

The outcome is obedience and covenant loyalty.

The sad tale that follows the book of Joshua reveals Israel's eventual faithlessness.

God was with Joshua, but it is only when God comes as Joshua that an Israelite achieves complete faithfulness to the Lord.

3. Preaching the Book of Joshua

Preaching through Joshua requires more than narrating ancient Israelite history and tacking on Jesus at the end of each sermon.

The writer to the Hebrews draws an analogy pointing to the similarity and dissimilarity between what Joshua did by leading Israel into Canaan and what Jesus does by leading his people into the rest of God (Heb. 4:8-16).

In Joshua, we see a man who prefigures Christ and points to what Jesus will come to do. The land of Canaan itself was a picture of the everlasting rest that God's people were to inherit, not in this life but in the life to come. This land of everlasting promise is the possession of every believer because one greater than Joshua has defeated every sin and demonic power that stands in the way of our eternal inheritance!

When we place the message of Joshua in its historical and redemptive context, then the relevance of this book for today becomes clear.

God not only kept and fulfilled his land promises through Joshua; He also keeps and fulfills his promises of salvation and of new heavens and a new earth through our Lord Jesus (Rev. 21 and 22) and God intends for His faithfulness to Christ to elicit faithfulness from his people as well (Rev. 22:7).

Like Israel assembled at Shechem to renew the covenant (Josh 24:1-15), a choice lies before the professing church today.

Will you be faithful to Jesus, the one who has been faithful for you?