



Joshua

Joshua 13-24

"Now Joshua was old and advanced in years, and the LORD said to him, "You are old and advanced in years, and there remains yet very much land to possess."

--Joshua 13:1

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Purpose

The primary focus of the Book of Joshua is the inheritance of the Promised Land. YHWH, the Divine Warrior, has been true to his promises made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and Moses. The Lord has given his faithful people victory and granted them the promised "rest".

Structure

The book of Joshua follows a very simple structure:

- V. Covenant renewal entering the Promised Land (1-5)
- VI. Conquering the Promised Land (6-12)
- VII. Distributing the Promised Land (13-21)
- VIII. Covenant Renewal within the Promised Land (22-24)

The book begins and ends with covenant renewal. The first renewal is from YHWH in renewing his promises with the leadership of Joshua. The book concludes with Israel's renewal of the covenant with YHWH. The central sections detail the conquest of the land its distribution to the twelve tribes. The structure emphasizes the need for covenant faithfulness by Israel and YHWH.

The Land that Yet Remains

Chapter 12 ends with a list of the thirty one kings that were defeated in the conquest under Joshua's leadership. Chapter 13 marks a transition from general conquest of the land of Canaan to the specific regions allocated to the tribes "yet" to be conquered.

Each tribe will be required to individually finish what was collectively started by Israel under Joshua. Chapters 13-21 provide for the distribution of the land. While the level of detail may seem monotonous to the non-Israelite reader, to an Israelite this represented a description of their personal allotted inheritance from YHWH. It was up to each tribe to claim their allotment by trusting YHWH who says to Israelites:

I myself will drive them out from before the people of Israel. Only allot the land to Israel for an inheritance, as I have commanded you.



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Map of the Tribal Allotments by Joshua²³

Now therefore divide this land for an inheritance to the nine tribes and half the tribe of Manasseh.

--Joshua 13:7



Bible History Online

²³ <http://www.bible-history.com/geography/maps/Map-Canaan-Twelve-Tribes.gif>



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The Inheritance East of the Jordan

The first allotment was to the tribes which had been given an inheritance East of the Jordan by Moses: Reuben, Gad and 1/2 Manasseh. Joshua 13:8-33, describes the borders of these tribes territory and the cities lying therein. One seemingly insignificant verse to note is the following:

Yet the people of Israel did not drive out the Geshurites or the Maacathites, but Geshur and Maacath dwell in the midst of Israel to this day.
--Joshua 13:13

The line reveals that not all the tribes were completely faithful in their task to inherit their region. In some ways the line is thrown into an otherwise positive account of possession. However, these small failures will develop into big problems for the nations in the future. Dale Ralph Davis writes:

Verse 13 seems matter of fact enough; incomplete obedience usually is. It brings no immediate crisis. It seldom does. However, here is testimony to all God's people: we frequently and strangely prove faithful in great crisis of faith, remain steadfast in severe storms, perhaps even relish the excitement of the heaviest assaults, yet lack the tenacity, the dogged endurance, the patient plodding often required in the prosaic affairs of believing life; we are often loath to be faithful in (what we regard as) little.²⁴

This small failure to complete the task, would be repeated by many of the tribes and result in big consequences as the history of redemption unfolds.

²⁴ Dale Ralph Davis, Joshua p. 112.



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Caleb the Finisher (14-15)

The 80 year old Caleb provides an example to all of Israel of faithful completion of the conquest. Caleb and Joshua were the only two members of the 1st generation of the exodus allowed to live to see the conquest. They are both examples of strong and courageous faith in God's promises to battle on Israel's behalf.

The occasion of Israel's initial fear in entering the promised land from the first was the presence of the Anakim. The spies reported in Numbers 13:33 "And there we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak, who came from the Nephilim), and we seemed to ourselves like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them."

It was this people and this region that Caleb requests of Joshua with full confidence of the lands inheritance in spite of his advanced age. Caleb shows strength and courage in the Lord:

I am still as strong today as I was in the day that Moses sent me; my strength now is as my strength was then, for war and for going and coming. ¹² So now give me this hill country of which the LORD spoke on that day, for you heard on that day how the Anakim were there, with great fortified cities. It may be that the LORD will be with me, and I shall drive them out just as the LORD said." --Joshua 14:11-12

Caleb's strength stemmed from his absolute and unwavering confidence in the promises and presence of YHWH" (v. 6, 9, 10, 12). Strength and courage come from YHWH's faithfulness to be present and deliver on his promises. Such faith is energizing and adventuresome! Caleb's victory in driving out the sons of Anak is recorded (15:13-19).

Caleb is an exemplary member of the tribe of Judah, however the rest of the tribe did not follow his example in fearless faith.

But the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the people of Judah could not drive out, so the Jebusites dwell with the people of Judah at Jerusalem to this day.
--Joshua 15:63



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Deviation to the Right and the Left (16-17)

Joshua and Israel was told that strength and courage are granted by keeping the law and word of the YHWH--not departing from it to the right or the left. (1:7)

The story of Caleb is a bright light of uncompromising faith in the word of the Lord in an otherwise tragic story of compromise on the part of the rest of the tribes. Their deviation from the word of YHWH will bear significant negative fruit for many years to come. The seeds are planted:

*However, they did not drive out the Canaanites who lived in Gezer, so the Canaanites have lived in the midst of Ephraim to this day but have been made to do forced labor.
--Joshua 16:10*

Yet the people of Manasseh could not take possession of those cities, but the Canaanites persisted in dwelling in that land. ¹³ Now when the people of Israel grew strong, they put the Canaanites to forced labor, but did not utterly drive them out. --Joshua 17:12-13

Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall.

¹¹ For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 1:3

The resistance on the part of the people of Joseph was due to discontent and fear! (17:15-16) Joshua encourages them to be strong and courageous in the face of their fears.

A New Day

The setting up of the Tent of Meeting in Shiloh marks a new day for the people Israel. "The Land lay subdued before them." (18:1) It is a day to finish the task! Joshua asks, "How long will you put off going in to take possession of the land, which the Lord, the God of your fathers gave to you?"

The final allotments of the land were then made to the remaining tribes. The concern is in the laxity of Israel. They are called to complete the job. And so Joshua finished dividing the land, but the tribes failed to finish the job of driving out its inhabitants.



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Final Details (20-22:9)

Chapters 20-22 describe the final details of settling the land in accordance with the Law of Moses. The cities of refuge are set up in chapter 20, the tribe of Levi is given its allotment among the tribes in chapter 21 and the trans-Jordan tribes are given leave to return to their regions across the Jordan as Moses gave to them. They have been faithful to their promise:

“You have kept all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you and have obeyed my voice in all that I have commanded you. ³You have not forsaken your brothers these many days, down to this day, but have been careful to keep the charge of the LORD your God.

⁴And now the LORD your God has given rest to your brothers, as he promised them. Therefore turn and go to your tents in the land where your possession lies, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you on the other side of the Jordan.

--Joshua 22:2-4

True Covenant Worship (22:10-24)

The final chapters of the Book of Joshua encourage right and faithful worship of the Lord. The future of Israel's unity and protection under YHWH depends on it. The story of the giant altar made by the Trans-Jordan tribes as a witness stands as a symbol of the type of zealous faithfulness to the Lord. There is a godly anxiety revealed among the tribes to keep proper worship. The unity of the tribes depends on it! "For it is a witness between us that the LORD is God!" (22:34)

In the last two chapters, Joshua calls the nation to assemble for a reading of the law. They are again reminded of the blessings and curses and challenged to:

¹⁴ “Now therefore fear the LORD and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. ¹⁵ And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.” --Joshua 24:14-15
