

14th January to 3rd March 2024

Resources for personal and lifegroup use

Written by David Rebel & Johnny Douglas

Quoteable quotes

“Not one of all the Lord’s good promises to Israel failed; every-one was fulfilled.”
Joshua 21:45

“Faith never knows where it is being led, but it loves and knows the One who is leading!”
Oswald Chambers

**“God is looking for willing hearts... You do not have to be special,
but you have to be available!”** Winkie Pratney

**“Our goal should be to live life in radical amazement... get up in the morning
and look at the world in a way that takes nothing for granted.
To be spiritual is to be amazed.”** Abraham Joshua Heschel

“Christ has no place in the life that is not dominated by the Word.” TB Joshua

**"Wherever you are, be all there. Live to the hilt every situation you
believe to be the will of God!!!"** Jim Elliot



The book of Joshua tells the story of the Israelites as they approach the River Jordan, having spent 40 years wandering in the desert after escaping from slavery in Egypt. Moses is dead and Joshua is their new leader. The people are about to cross the Jordan and enter Canaan, the promised land. The book ends when Joshua dies, the land has been settled and God's promise to give his people a land of their own had been fulfilled. The year is about 1250BC.

The book of Joshua may seem at first to be a book of history but on deeper inspection we see it is the story of God's promise to his people and how Joshua is instrumental in bringing this about. Joshua was a great military leader whose faith in God was unchanging. He acknowledged that the victory belonged to God and he inspired the people to remain faithful. There is no suggestion that this is easy and the book details many failures and disappointments. The overarching theme is that God is in control and does not break his promise.

Joshua 21:45. Not one of the Lord's promises to Israel failed; everyone was fulfilled.

Joshua's response to God was obedience and the people learnt that obedience meant doing things God's way.

Joshua 24:15. Choose today whom you will serve. As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

Why study this book.

We can learn to live a life of obedience to God, a life where we are changed from wandering in the desert of despair to living a full life in the land which God has prepared for us. (Alan Redpath) The Old and New Testaments are complimentary and cannot be fully understood in isolation. The book of Joshua describes how God led his chosen people, the Jews, into the promised land and how they were to live there. For us it is not enough that we understand what Jesus has done and believe in him, we need to know how to 'live in the land'.

What we can learn from Joshua - writes Charles Price.

- The source of boldness in intimidating circumstances
- How weakness allows God to show His strength
- How to deal with disappointment
- How to find restoration after failure
- Why I cannot trust God without obedience
- Why the past can give confidence in God's power for the present
- Why the principles of God working in the Old Testament are the same for today.

Week 1 God promises the Land. Genesis 12:1-9

Gen 12:7 ..the land, Gen 12:2 ..the nation, Genesis 12:3 blessing.
God's preparation is perfect and we can trust his promises.

Week 2 Preparing to enter the Land. Joshua 1:1-17

The promise to Joshua ... "I will be with you"... keep the book of the law....the people's response to obey and follow Joshua.

Week 3 Rahab and the spies. Joshua 2:1-24

The problem of 'the lie'. A prostitute and liar becomes a woman of faith. (Heb 11:31)

Week 4 Crossing the Jordan. Joshua 3:1-17

The crossing of the Jordan does not represent going to glory but the change of a life lived for self to a life lived for Christ.

Week 5 The fall of Jericho. Joshua 6:1-27

By faith the walls fell down. (Hebrews 11:30)

Discussion of killing the innocent ... the holy war... in the end 'Will not the judge of all the earth do right'.

Week 6 Achan and Ai. Joshua 7:1-12, 7:24-8:2

Up to this point success but now defeat. cf the Christian life.

Week 7 The tabernacle at Shiloh. Joshua 18:1-10

Jordan crossed, Jericho captured, the land divided up, but now they have to learn how to live in it and not wander from the right path. The haunting words from Robinson's hymn. "Let thy grace now like a fetter, bind my wandering heart to thee. Prone to wander, prone to leave the God I love!"

Week 8 Looking back. Joshua 23:1-8, 24:15,28-31

The Lord fights for you, be careful to love Him Jos 23:10,11.

As for me and my house we will serve the Lord Jos 24:15

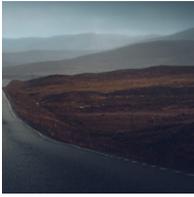
The ethical problems of war and the book of Joshua

We can't read the Old Testament, and especially the book of Joshua, without encountering the problems of warfare, and how the text deals with the moral problems of conquest and killing. To some people this is a great obstacle to faith and can be hard to reconcile with the message of love we find in the gospels.

Some would argue that the book is written in a time when war and bloodshed were normal and universally accepted. It should be taken as history and judged by the standards of the time and therefore poses no ethical problem. *This is not an argument most will accept.* However, it must be realised that the writer is recording fact and not attempting to justify the case for war and brutal genocide. It is valid to examine what God is saying to the people of that time and therefore what he may be teaching us.

There are certain facts which are accepted without argument and others which we need to understand. God is almighty and just and can do no wrong. He has created us and sustains our world. He has a plan and has chosen one nation through which He will bring about his purposes. That nation needed to be pure, obedient and unable to tolerate and be tempted by the vice and immorality of the existing Canaanites who practised idol worship and even child sacrifice. If we begin with our knowledge of our Heavenly Father as revealed to us in the person of the Lord Jesus, we can see His love, but also his righteousness and justice. We need to see the evil in the world today, just as it was then, and understand how our God cannot tolerate evil and sin. In fact, it is central to our faith that Christ came to be our Saviour and die for the sins of the whole world.

If we approach the book of Joshua from this position then perhaps God can speak to us with it's message of faith and obedience. What we must not do is to say that the God of the Old Testament is different to the God of the New Testament.



Key scriptures in the book of Joshua

- I will never leave you nor forsake you 1:5
- Be strong and courageous 1:6
- Be careful to obey the Law, meditating on it day and night. Do not turn from it to the left or to the right. 1:8
- The Lord your God will be with you wherever you go 1:9
- Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you. 3:5
- Not one of the Lord's promises to the house of Israel failed; everyone was fulfilled. 21:45
- Hold fast to the Lord your God 23:11
- Fear the Lord and serve Him with all faithfulness 24:14
- Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve. But for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. 24:15



Week 1 - God promises the land

Genesis 12:1-9

We start the story of Joshua back in the book of Genesis where God makes a promise to Abraham “leave your country and go-I will give you a land-I will make you a great nation-all people on Earth will be blessed through you”. This anticipation of a future when God will use his chosen nation, the Jews, to restore all people to the relationship which He intended in the beginning and to be a blessing to the whole world. This promise was ultimately fulfilled in Jesus. It took 500 years from the promise for Joshua to enter the land of Canaan, having spent 400 years in slavery in Egypt, and then wandering in the desert.

1. Why did it take so long for God’s promise of a land for the Israelites to be fulfilled? Did they do something to displease him? Did they learn anything along the way? Was their leader Moses to blame?
2. What can we learn from the Israelites time of waiting? Are we impatient when God’s promises are not immediately fulfilled. In our own experience have we had to wait so that we could learn something from God?
3. Why did the Israelites need a land? How did God use their settled status to bring about his purposes?
4. ‘Do we live in the promise or are we in the wilderness of despair?’ Alan Redpath. Does our Christian life reflect all that God has promised or are we just half-full Christians who complain because we want our own way? ‘Are we standing on the promises or just sitting in the premises’ Richard Bewes?
5. God promised that all the nations of the Earth would be blessed through his chosen people. Do we take this promise as our own?
6. Christ has won the victory on the cross and now it is up to us to claim all the peoples of the Earth for him. What is our excuse?
7. Abraham was living a settled life in Ur (archaeologists suggest that Ur was a flourishing civilised city at this time). God told him to go. Would we be so obedient?
8. As Christians what do we believe about the land of Jesus’ birth? Does the physical land of Israel have any special spiritual significance anymore? In what sense is the church the new Israel?
9. The Israelites were chosen to be God’s special people for a purpose. They soon came to think of themselves as superior to their neighbours. Do we as the Church forget our primary responsibility



Week 2 - Preparing to enter the Land.

Joshua 1:1-17

Now we come to the main story. Moses is dead and Joshua, God's replacement, is now tasked with crossing the Jordan River and entering the promised land. Joshua and Caleb were the only two adults remaining of those who had left Egypt some forty years earlier.

Joshua was told to cross into the land of Canaan which would be given to him. There would be fighting but the victory was guaranteed ; all they had to do was receive it.

The promised land of Canaan encompassed what is now Israel, Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan and parts of Syria and Lebanon. It was occupied by the Canaanite tribes which were in some ways more advanced than the Israelites, living in fortified towns. However, they lived lives of depravity, pagan worship and even child sacrifice.

Some have thought of crossing the river to be an analogy to entering heaven, but it is clear that it represents crossing from the old life of sin to the new life which we share when we become Christians and enter into His rest.

1. In v.3 why was it significant that they should receive only the land where they set their feet? (we are promised salvation but we need to accept it)
2. What did God promise Joshua in v.5. Have you ever felt forsaken? Can you think of other places where God promises to care for you?
3. God promised the Israelites the land of Canaan. What does God promise to give us? How do we claim these promises?
4. Joshua had big boots to fill in following Moses. How do we avoid making our leaders indispensable?
5. In v.7&8 what was Joshua to do? What does it mean to meditate day and night? Are we challenged to be careful as in v.7?
6. In v.10&11 Joshua made plans for the task ahead. Why wasn't prayer enough?
7. We have to trust in Jesus to enter the new life God wants for us. Here he tells Joshua not to be discouraged (v.9). What are our discouragements?
8. What does God promise at the end of v.9. Is this our experience?



Week 3 - Rahab and the spies.

Joshua 2: 1-24

The Israelites are now encamped on the eastern bank of the Jordan, ready to cross over the river and come up against the first Canaanite city of Jericho. Spies are sent out and come to the house of Rahab who is a prostitute and liar.

Rahab is an important figure in the bible as she is a direct antecedent of King David and the Lord Jesus. She is commended for her faith (Hebrews 11:31).

1. The Canaanites feared God, because they had seen his power and what he had done. Is the fear of God something we are aware of in our lives today?
2. Rahab's encounter with God was by hearing of his mighty deeds, not by hearing his words. Discuss.
3. What are we fearful of? Are these things which have already been conquered by Christ? Read Philippians 4:6-7.
4. What was Rahab's response to what the spies asked of her?
5. What do you think is the significance of the scarlet cord in verse 15 to 21?
6. Rahab lied to hide the spies. Can lying be justified? Can you think of any situation when lying might not be condemned?
7. Rahab was considered righteous before God (justified). Read James 2: 24-26. What does James teach us about how we are accounted righteous before God, by our deeds, our faith or both?



Week 4 - Crossing the Jordan.

Joshua 3:1-17

We are told how the whole nation of Israel crosses the Jordan River on dry land, with the Levitical priests carrying the Ark of the covenant, which represented the presence of God among his people. The crossing of the Jordan was a miraculous act of God. We are told that the river was in flood, it wasn't just a narrow stream like it is today in parts, but could be 1.5 km wide and 3m deep. The miracle was a sign of God's power and his promise to establish a land of righteousness and justice, and destroy immorality and evil.

There are parallels between the Christian life, and the crossings of the Red Sea and the River Jordan. The Red Sea crossing can show deliverance from the slavery of sin whilst crossing the River Jordan can represent coming into a new life of rest, inheritance and blessing.

1. In v.5 what do you think 'consecrate yourself' means? What does it mean for us? Are we sometimes so engrossed in the world that we fail to see and hear God?
2. Do you find it hard to believe in the miracles in the Bible? (the Canaanites believed the crossing of the River Jordan was a miracle).
3. What do you think were the feelings of the people when they were on the edge of the River Jordan?
4. Do we sometimes not step out in faith even when we have God's promise to be with us?
5. What does v.7 teach us about Christian leadership.
6. God, symbolised by the Ark, led the people. Do we always follow where God leads or do we make our own way?
7. Read ch.5v.1. The Canaanites saw and they were afraid. Does this happen today? Why not?
8. Compare the crossings of the Red Sea and the River Jordan. What lessons can we learn?
9. Later in ch 4 God commanded that Joshua set up 12 stones as a memorial in Gilgal. Do we need memorials to remember what God has done for us? Do you have particular reminders in your Christian life?



Week 5 - The fall of Jericho.
Joshua 6:1-27

Here we have the story of the conquest of Jericho, a fortified, gated, city with established defences. Against them come nomadic tribesmen who have lived in tents and wandered in the desert for 40 years. The story shows how God was in control, and it was Him who gave the victory. The frequency of the number seven (a perfect number) and the presence of the Ark showed it was God, not man that overcame a greater and stronger nation. The Israelites had to be obedient to God's instructions and to trust in His power to save.

1. God gave clear instructions to the Israelites. What do you think the king and people of Jericho were thinking at the strange actions of their attackers? Do non-Christians look at us when we approach a problem and react to it in an unconventional way? Are we mocked for our inactivity or our refusal to be vengeful? What should our response be?
2. What do you think the Israelites were thinking as they marched? Do you think they were sure of their own abilities?
3. Read Hebrews 11:30. What does this mean? Do we attempt to live in our own strength and not trusting God?
4. V.21 seemed very difficult for us to reconcile with our understanding of the God of love. Discuss , with the earlier notes in the introduction.
5. Do we try to win our battles by human means or do we turn to God? What does this mean in practice? Can you give examples from your own life?
6. What was the significance of the first six days? Can we learn from this?
7. God brought victory as the Israelites obeyed him. Can you think of promises that God has made that are conditional on our obedience to him?
8. Contrast the salvation of Rahab and her family with the salvation we are offered in Christ.



Week 6 - Achan and Ai.

Joshua 7:1-12 and 7:24-8:2

Having conquered Jericho the Israelites go on to the next city Ai, but this time they suffered defeat. Ai was a smaller city and they were overconfident so sent a smaller army. This however was not the reason for their defeat, it was the sin of Achan. He disobeyed God by keeping some of the silver and gold when Jericho had been attacked, which was 'devoted to the Lord', which meant it should either be destroyed or put into the treasury (6:19).

Achan's sin had to be dealt with so that Ai could be overcome and the Israelites proceed into the promised land.

1. When the Israelites were defeated at Ai they blamed God when in fact it was their own disobedience. Why do people blame God when things go wrong in their lives?
2. God's instructions about the devoted things, which should not be taken, was clear. We so often disobey God's rules and then are surprised by the outcome. Discuss.
3. The sin was Achan's but the whole nation was punished. Can you think of examples when your actions affect your whole family, church or community?
4. What sins in our Church have affected our witness and the work of Christ. What are the main areas where we as a church have been disobedient to God?
5. In v.5 we see Joshua's concern for the name of God (his glory and honour). When we sin are we concerned for God's name and the sorrow that our sin causes to our Heavenly Father?
6. When Joshua first attacked Ai he didn't come before God in prayer. It was only after the Israelites defeat that they turned to God. Do we only turn to God when things go wrong?
7. Do we obey God even when his commands are difficult to understand? Do we ignore Him when we think his instructions don't apply to us?



Week 7 - The tabernacle at Shiloh

Joshua 18:1-10

The distribution of land amongst the twelve tribes was still unfinished and seven of the tribes had not received their inheritance. However it was time for the tabernacle or tent of meeting to be set up and given a permanent home. The tent which could be taken down for the journeys contained the Ark of the Covenant with the tablets of the ten commandments. Now it was to be set up in a place which God had chosen, in Shiloh about 25 miles north of Jerusalem.

1. God's physical presence was thought to be in the ark of the covenant. We no longer meet God in this way, as we believe the Holy Spirit dwells within each one of us. Why do we need a special building to worship in?

2. The temple where the Ark was finally deposited became a place of great beauty and outward show. How can we ensure that we don't keep God locked within our structures and systems but worship Him in Spirit and in truth.

3. The land was divided up by Joshua under God's instruction but the tribes had to take possession of it. Here we are told that 7 tribes still hadn't received their portions. God has promised and given us so much but we often don't receive it. Discuss.

4. What is our inheritance as Christians (1 Peter 1:4)
What is our guarantee (Ephesians 1:14)

5. In Joshua 13:33 we are told that the tribe of Levi (the priestly tribe) were not given an inheritance of land. What was their inheritance? As Christians we are told that we are a royal priesthood so should we claim the same?

6. Look back to see what God has done in your life and what he has promised you. Are we, like the 7 tribes, not looking forward to all that God has prepared for us, but happy with second best?

7. Jordan crossed, Jericho captured, the land being divided up, but now they have to learn how to live in it and not wander from the right path.

The haunting words from Robinson's hymn:

"Let thy grace now like a fetter, bind my wandering heart to thee.

Prone to wander, prone to leave the God I love."

We are told that nothing can separate us from the love of God, but can we wander?



Week 8 - Looking back.

Joshua 23:1-8 and 24:15, 28-31

We come to the end of Joshua's life, and he summons the leaders of Israel, and reminds them what God had promised, and what God has done for them. All that had been achieved was done by God's power and it was Him who had won the victory (v.3) He teaches them that they must remain faithful to God's law and not be contaminated by the heathen nations around who worship false Gods. They were to hold fast to the Lord their God, who promised that he would hold fast to them, and never let them go.

Joshua then calls all the people to Shechem, the place where God appeared to Abraham and promised him the land 500 years earlier. He reminds them all of what God had done for them and tells them "to fear the Lord and serve Him with all faithfulness".

1. Joshua reminded the people to be separate from the surrounding nations. Why? Read Romans 12:1-2. What does it teach us about our relationship with the world? Should we be in the world but not of the world?
2. Do we remember what God has done for us? Do we give thanks for all our blessings?
3. Are we proud of our achievements and don't acknowledge that without God we do nothing.? Read 1Thess 5:24
4. 23:6 again reminds us to obey everything written in the Law. How does this apply to a Christian?
5. In 24:29 it says that Joshua the servant of the Lord died. Rev 14:13 says 'Blessed are those who die in the service of the Lord'. How much do we believe in servant ministry? Do we really want to be the servant of all?
6. God has kept his promise by sending a Saviour. The battle has been won and death has been defeated. We must decide to follow Him and claim His promises for ourselves. Do we say with 24:15 'As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord'. What does this mean for us?
7. In 23:6 Joshua exhorts the leaders to be strong. The epistles make this clearer a) 2Tim 2:1 Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus and b) Ephesians 6:10 Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. In what ways do you feel strong?
8. Joshua commissions the future leaders before his death. If he was alive today, what do you think he would say to the church as his final command?