

Even though God had given Israel the land, this was no guarantee that they would always live in the land. Joshua warned the nation that God would be faithful to his promises to *remove* them from the land if they violated the covenant (Josh 23:14-16). When Israel became as wicked as the Canaanites they dispossessed, God declared that the time had come for a reverse-Conquest in which foreign nations would carry Israel into exile (Jer 5; Ezek 16).

At the time of David (Ps 95) and in the time of Jesus (Matt 11:28-30), the promise of rest still remained because it had not been fulfilled in the past. This rest is the rest from all effects of sin and it will be given to all those who remain faithful to the Lord and do not fall away (Heb 4). This rest will be fulfilled in the millennial kingdom when the Messiah subdues all his enemies (Pss 2, 110; Matt 13:41, 49) and his followers inherit the earth (Matt 5:3-12; 25:31-34; Rev 20:4)

In the future when God makes a New Covenant with his people, he will bring them out of exile (Isa 11:11-16), remove the enemies who have taken over the Land (Obad 15-21), and plant Israel, “never again to be uprooted from the land I have given them” (Amos 9:15).

### GOING FURTHER

How does the story of Rahab communicate the main themes of the book (ch. 2)?

Why is it so important to list in such great detail the borders and cities (chs. 12-21)?

How are chapters 23 and 24 a fitting climax to the book?

### PREPARATION FOR THE NEXT STUDY

Read the book of Judges. Pay careful attention to chapters 1-2. As you read the whole book, think about what Israel’s problems are. How does this book contrast with Joshua? What is the solution?

Read the book of Ruth, a beautiful story which occurred “in the days when the judges ruled.” How does this book contrast with Judges? What does it say about Israel’s hope?

## GOD’S FAITHFULNESS IN THE GIFT OF THE LAND (JOSHUA)

### PREPARATION FOR THIS STUDY

Read the book of Joshua, preferably in one sitting. (You may skim the lists in chapters 12-21.) What is the message of the book? How does Joshua relate to Gen-Deut? As you read, be thinking about promise/fulfillment, rest, and covenant faithfulness.

### OUTLINE OF JOSHUA

- I. The Lord prepares the tribes to enter the Land in a state of holiness (1:1-5:15).
- II. The Lord gives the Land to Israel in a series of campaigns (6:1-12:24).
- III. The tribes receive the Land with both faith and disobedience (13:1-21:45).
- IV. The tribes recognize that their blessings in the Land depend upon covenant loyalty (22:1-24:33).

### THE MESSAGE OF JOSHUA

Joshua leads the Israelites into the Promised Land where they defeat the inhabitants and subdue the land. The land is divided among the 9.5 remaining tribes, and Joshua exhorts the people to remain faithful in order to prosper.

Emphasis #1: The Lord fought for Israel. He went before them and defeated the Canaanites. The Lord did not serve Israel, but Israel served the Lord (ch. 5). Jericho trembled in fear of the Lord (ch. 6). More of the Canaanite coalition died from hailstones than from swords (ch. 10). The Lord gave a vast army in the north into the hands of Israel (ch. 11).

Emphasis #2: The Lord was entirely faithful to Israel. God did everything he promised to do. Not one enemy was successful against the Lord (21:43-45).

Emphasis #3: Israel’s faithlessness resulted in defeat. Violating God’s commands caused the death of Israelites (ch. 7). Failing to consult the Lord resulted in long-term frustration (ch. 9).

## CHAPTER 22

This story is a very encouraging one, indicating that all twelve tribes were zealous for faithful adherence to the covenant. Altars are typically used for sacrifices, and the 9.5 tribes feared that their brothers had already strayed from the Lord and were guilty of rebellion (22:16-18). The raising of this concern, with the people's conscious recognition of their idolatrous past, is precisely what the Lord desired from the people (cf. Deut 13). Fortunately, the Transjordan tribes were not guilty of idolatry or disloyalty. They explained that the purpose of the altar was memorial (22:27). The importance of covenant loyalty both caused and diffused the crisis.

## CHAPTER 23

The book's tension between the Lord's faithfulness and the people's responsibility reaches a crescendo in Joshua's farewell message to the nation's leaders. Joshua explains that the Lord had fought for his people and yet the people must be strong and careful to obey God's commands. The past faithfulness of the Lord must motivate the present obedience of the people. Future blessing by the Lord required the present obedience of the nation. The Lord has fulfilled all of his promises, but if the nation violates the covenant, then they will not survive in the good land he has given them (23:14-15). Covenant loyalty will determine the future of Israel.

## CHAPTER 24

Joshua challenges the people to make a firm commitment to serve the Lord, and to do so with all of their hearts (24:14-15). Their leader understands the people's predilections and so he insists on an unambiguous answer by challenging their resolve (24:19). The people respond affirmatively a second and a third time, with the result that Joshua decrees that their words will testify against them if they rebel (24:22). The covenant that Joshua made here is best understood as a renewal of the previous covenant that the people had made with the Lord at Mount Sinai. They affirmed their agreement to honor this covenant and to keep its stipulations.

## LOOKING BACKWARDS (GEN-DEUT)

God had promised to give the land of Canaan to Abraham's descendants after the cup of the Amorites was full (Gen 15:13-21; Deut 9:4-6). This began to be fulfilled in Joshua.

God had promised to bring Jacob's descendants back to Canaan from the land of Egypt (Gen 46:4). This began to be fulfilled in Joshua.

God delivered Israel from Egypt in order to make them his people and bring them into the land promised to the patriarchs (Exod 6:6-8). This was fulfilled in Joshua.

The rest that had been lost when the ground was cursed, when Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden of Eden, and when the twelve tribes were enslaved in Egypt is to be given to a faithful Israel living in a land of abundance (Deut 8:7-9; 12:9-10).

The covenant that God had made with Israel was to guide the nation. They were to meditate on it day and night, to obey it, to read it in the assembly, and to write it on stones on Mount Ebal (Josh 1:8; 8:30-35).

## LOOKING FORWARDS (JUDG-REV)

While the Lord had defeated Israel's enemies, the task of settling the land was not complete during Joshua's lifetime (Josh 18:3; 23:4-5). When Israel was unfaithful to the covenant, as they were in the years of the judges, they would be oppressed by foreigners. When Israel was faithful to the Lord, God would give great victory, as he did with David and his battles against Goliath and the Philistines.

Israel was generally faithful to the Lord while Joshua was alive, but without godly leadership, Israel refused to obey. Thus the refrain in Judges is that "in those days Israel had no king; every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (21:25). When Israel had a righteous king, they were led to covenant obedience and therefore to success and peace (2 Sam 8:14; 1 Kgs 4:20-25).