

JOSHUA: Captain of our Salvation

Joshua means "Yahweh is salvation," or "the LORD is salvation." Variant forms of his name include Jehoshua, and Yeshua. It is the Hebrew name of the Greek form of "Jesus." In Numbers 13:16 his name was changed from Oshua to Jeho shua (Numbers 13:8, 16). The Divine name was incorporated into his. We first encounter the man Joshua as a successful conqueror, not slaying innocent people, but in fighting the enemies of the LORD (Exodus 17:8ff). He is a victorious conquering hero.

Joshua was born in Egypt and became Moses' right hand man during the exodus and desert wanderings. He was Moses companion at Sinai (Exodus 24:13), and one of the twelve spies who went to spy out the Promised Land. Only Joshua and Caleb had the faith and courage to advocate conquering the land (Numbers 14:6ff). They were the only adult males who left Egypt to enter Canaan 40 years later (Num. 14:30). Joshua assumed leadership after the death of Moses. He was 110 years old when he died.

The book of Deuteronomy (33:37 36:13) records the farewell and death of Moses. The book of Joshua opens with the work of Moses completed. God has provided His people with a written revelation, a priesthood, a place to worship, a system of laws and a new leader to conquer the promised land. Joshua takes over the leadership of Israel. The Israelites were encamped in the Plain of Moab, awaiting the Lord s'command to go over and possess Canaan. His responsibility is to conquer the land and settle the tribes in their appointed boundaries. The date of crossing over Jordan is about 1406 B.C. The conquered land was first known as Canaan, and then Palestine. The to the descendents of Abraham it was known as the Promised Land.

The first historical book in our English Bible is named after its conquering hero. It is the first in the Former Prophets in the Hebrew Bible. It begins with the Lord's commission of Joshua (1:1 9) and concludes with his death and burial (24:29 33).

AUTHOR: Ancient Jewish tradition in the Talmud attributes the book to Joshua, the commander of the Conquest of the Promised Land. A few sections could not have been written by him (15:13ff; 24:29f). However, Eleazar or Phinehas could have added these verses. Joshua 24:1 26 specifically identifies Joshua as author and eyewitness to these events. The accuracy of the stories of the conquest is supported by archaeological findings. There is disagreement among the scholars as to the date of some sites. The material comes from a time reasonably close to the actual events (6:25). Clearly the author was an eyewitness to many of the events (5:1, 6). The book as we have it was completed after the death of Joshua.

DATE: The events of Joshua begin where the book of Deuteronomy concludes. "After the death of Moses" (1:1; cf. Deuteronomy 34:1 6). With the death of Moses, Joshua takes over the leadership of Israel. It covers about 45 50 years. The date of the Conquest was c. 1406 B. C. Initial conquest was about seven years and 25 for the division and allotment of the land. The time of writing is not long after the events described, c. 1400 B. C. Cf. Numbers 13:15; Exodus 17:9f; 24:13; Numbers 14:6f; 27:18 23. Joshua died c. 1390 B.C.

THEME: The faithfulness of God in fulfilling under Joshua's leadership the promises He made to

Moses to conquer and take possession of the Promised Land (1:2-4; 11:23; 21:45; 24:14-16). God is faithful to the promises He has made to the people of His Covenant. What He has promised He will do. God is faithful to His promises.

PURPOSE: JHVH will hold Israel true to her covenant with Him. Victory comes through faith in the LORD God and obedience to His Word.

KEY VERSES: 11:23; 21:45

TYPE: There are no distinct messianic prophecies in this book, however Joshua is clearly a type of Christ. Just as Joshua was the great conqueror leading the chosen people into the Promised land of Canaan, Jesus his great successor is leading His own into the Promised Land of Heaven. Joshua's name *Yeshua* is the equivalent of the name *Jesus*. Both names mean, "Yahweh is salvation." He foreshadows the coming One who will bring "many sons to glory" (Hebrews 2:10). Our great conquering Hero leads us into our final rest.

Moreover, the scarlet thread which provided Rahab and her family safety (Joshua 2:17-21) vividly portrays the safety that is the believer's through the blood of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 9:19-22).

CANAAN

The land of Canaan was composed of individual city-states. Each of these cities had their own king. Therefore, to conquer the land meant to defeat each city one at a time since there was no central government in Canaan. Toward the end of the conquest we find some of the cities banding together against their common enemy (chapters 10, 11).

These city-states in Canaan were well laid out and advanced culturally and technically. There was extensive foreign trade with Mesopotamia, Egypt and Cyprus. Canaanite houses were of good design with floors paved or plastered. Most cities had developed drainage systems. There were artisans of gold, copper and lead. Some of the finest pottery has been excavated there.

It is also important to keep in mind that Canaan was only one of Israel's enemies at that time. Ultimately, however, she was the worst. Only a few of the battles are recorded in Joshua. The emphasis is on Israel driving out the inhabitants of the land so she could conquer her inheritance. She had to conquer the pagan influences of the land.

CANAANITE RELIGION: Inhabitants were immoral, offered child sacrifices, priestesses were temple prostitutes, Sodomites were male temple prostitutes, etc. The Temples of Baal, Ashtoreth and other Canaanites were centers of vice. Baal was the principal god of the Canaanites, and his wife Ashtoreth was their goddess. She was the personification of the reproductive principle in nature. Her Babylonian name was Ishtar, Astarte her Greek name. What made Canaanite worship of Baal so appealing to Israel was it was held to be the god of the weather and fertile crops. The worship of these Canaanite gods consisted of extravagant orgies in their vice-centered temples. Immoral indulgence was a means of worship for the pagan Canaanites, and they murdered their first-born children as a sacrifice to the same gods.

One archaeological find revealed a number of jars containing the remains of children and newborn babes who had been sacrificed to Baal.

However, JHVH is holy and His people must be holy. God warned Israel, and later executed

punishment upon them by cruel nations. Israel was solemnly warned that if she turned to the sins of the people of the land she would be cast out of the land. That was precisely what happened. The dealings of God with Israel is severer than His dealings with Canaanites. God will not make a truce with sin. Assyria and Babylon ultimately became the instruments of God in dealing with Israel's sin. We know from Judges 2:11-15 that many Canaanites were allowed to remain in the land and as a result Israel suffered from their influence spiritually. What had to be destroyed were the pagan shrines and their cultic devices. Wherever the Canaanite religion was tolerated the Israelites quickly absorbed it.

ETHICAL PROBLEMS IN JOSHUA

Why does God command Israel to exterminate the people who were living in the Promised Land? Cf. Deuteronomy 9:4-6; 12:30-32; Leviticus 18:21-30; Numbers 25:1-5, 16-18; Joshua 6:17-21; 8:21-29.

It is important to keep in mind the peculiar role of the nation of Israel and the exceeding wickedness of the land that had been promised to her. Israel was the redemptive nation, chosen by God and set aside for His holy purpose as a witness and testimony to all nations. She was to show the way of eternal redemption. How could she do so if she were not separated from the evil influence of the Canaanites? When Israel chose disobedience and sin she lost the blessing.

The inhabitants of Canaan had espoused a type of religion in which sexual promiscuity played a prominent part. They practiced sacred prostitution, human sacrifices and snake worship. The immoral practices were an abomination to God and would offend the moral senses of most modern men including non-Christians. Archaeologists tremble at the evidence of wickedness in Canaan.

God has always punished sin wherever He has found it. God is perpetually at war with sin. Even in Israel Achan defied God's warning and by this one man's sin, he involved the whole nation in sin. He and his whole family were stoned for his sin. Possibly, the whole family was involved in the deception, and the hiding of the items was a matter of agreement among the members. It would appear that not only Achan himself but his whole family was involved in the deception and cover up which brought national disaster. The amount of contraband hidden in the family tent was sufficiently large that scarcely any member of the family could have been unaware of its existence. There seems to be agreement among the members of the family. Because of the social implications, the nation could not allow the sin to go unpunished. In the time of Joshua the family was considered to be a unit but it was also considered to be a part of the larger family which was becoming a nation. To allow a sin with social implications to go unpunished would be a moral disaster.

J. Rea writing in the *Zondervan Pictorial Bible Encyclopedia* writes:

God is one, and He does not change. He is the same in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. He shows love and mercy to the heathen (e.g. to Nineveh, Jonah 4:11) as well as to Israel in the Old Testament; and he shows wrath and takes vengeance on the wicked and idolaters in the New Testament (on the money changers, John 2:14-16; Romans 2:1-9; Ephesians 4:17-24; 5:3-11; II Thessalonians 15-9; Revelation 21:8). God is no respecter of persons. Equally severe judgment was inflicted upon false prophets and idolaters among the ranks of Israel (Exodus 32:25-29), 35; Deuteronomy 13:1-18). God warned His own chosen people of the consequences of disobedience, and later executed punishment upon them by the sword of cruel nations. He will do so again in the end of time when Jerusalem will be besieged and trodden upon yet once more (Luke 21:24; Revelation 11:2; 13:5).

But why exterminate the Canaanites? Were they actually more wicked in Joshua's day than

other idolatrous people on earth? The Aztecs and Mayas of Central America, for example, practiced human sacrifices. But in His inscrutable wisdom God selected Canaan, not another nation, as the land that he promised to Abraham. He considered it to be at the center (lit. "navel") of the earth (Ezekiel 38:12; cf. 5:5); hence it would exert an influence on the rest of the world throughout history out of all proportions to its size.

. . . . Furthermore, the Canaanites were sinning against spiritual light. In the days of Melchizedek and Abraham they had a witness from the one true God, they saw divine judgment fall upon Sodom and its sister cities, and before the Conquest they quaked at His mention (Joshua 2:8-11). . . . By 1400 B. C. the Canaanite civilization and religion had become one of the weakest, most decadent, and most immoral cultures of the civilized world. Many of its repulsive practices were prohibited to Israel in Leviticus 18. In view of the sexual perversions listed, it is more than likely that venereal diseases ravaged a large part of the population.

Moreover, remember that in the midst of wrath Yahweh demonstrated mercy. Rahab and her family were spared, delivered from death "by grace through faith." She is even included in the lineage of the Messiah.

The horrible depravity and gross idolatry was a moral cancer that had to be removed at all costs. Israel acted as executioners of Divine wrath. Later the Assyrians would be the rod of God's anger to punish the Northern Kingdom of Israel (722 B.C.), and Babylon would be God's instrument to take the Southern Kingdom into exile (586 B. C.). In a similar way Israel was God's instrument of judgment on the Canaanite city states.

MIRACULOUS ELEMENTS IN JOSHUA

There have always been those who doubted the accuracy of the Biblical account because of the miracles in the book. How do you explain the sun being delayed in its setting? Who made the sun, moon and stars, and the universe? If you believe God the creator made the universe then there should be no problem in believing that He could intervene in His universe to accomplish His plan of redemption. It is the existence of His redemptive nation in its campaign to conquer the Promised Land that is at stake. God will not allow his redemptive purpose to be defeated. It is interesting that all ancient peoples on various continents have a tradition about the longest day in history. Who is in control of the sun, moon and stars? If you can rationalize away miracles you can rationalize away God and therefore you rationalize away your responsibility to Him.

The object of all the miracles was to reveal the power and grace of God. Israel did not deliver itself. The mighty arm of the LORD God delivered Israel. It was not by military conquest as much as it was God's free gift of Canaan. God provided the land. Can you imagine what must have gone on in the minds of the enemies when they discovered the God of Israel was no local deity? JHVH is the God of the universe. Whatever happened that day caused the Israelites to be greatly strengthened and their enemies to become frightened before them. It was an act of God. God had kept His promise to be with His people.

CONTENTS: The book easily divides into three parts (1) the Conquest which lasted about seven years (chapters 1-12), the (2) Settlement in the Land which took another 25 years (chapters 13-24) and (3) the Consecration of the People (chapters 22-24).

Joshua died at the age of 110 years, but his message lives on even in our day. The LORD God is a holy

God and He demands that His people serve Him in holiness. Just as Israel was to be a priestly nation to reveal God's truth we, too, must be a people separated to God to accomplish His holy purpose.

Some Abiding Principles in Joshua

- | When God's people obey unconditionally the victory is certain. Victory depends upon obedience to God. Obedience is imperative. If we love Him we will obey Him.
- | When there is total dependence upon God victory is assured. The triumph of faith is stressed in Joshua as it portrays the entire nation marching unitedly to victory in total trust upon the LORD.
- | The spiritual victory that God provides in Christ is beautifully pictured in this book. The crossing over Jordan and conquering the Promised Land is a beautiful illustration of the Christian's spiritual experience of conflict, triumph and blessing in the "heavenlies" or spiritual realm (Ephesians 1:3; 2:6; 6:12) through the mighty power of God (Eph. 1:19, 20, 20; 6:10). Compare the battle of Israel in entering and possessing Canaan with the Christian's battles on earth.
- | The events of the Exodus and the Conquest are highly typical as seen in I Corinthians 10:1-14. For example, Joshua is the Captain who leads Israel into the Land, and Jesus is the Captain of our Salvation (Hebrews 2:10), who brings believers today into Promised Rest (Heb. 4:8, 9; Acts 20:32; 26:18). Joshua interceded for Israel when the nation sinned and was defeated (Joshua 7:6-15), so Jesus is our Advocate who intercedes continually for His own (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; I John 2:1). Joshua led the Israelites to victory over the enemies of God, so Christ makes possible our victory over sin (Romans 8:37; II Corinthians 1:10; 2:14) and Satan (Hebrews 2:14, 15; I John 3:8).

Title: Introduction to Joshua
Series: A Look at the Book

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