

# Joshua

## *A Suggested Outline of Joshua*

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## *Introductory Notes to Joshua*

### **I. Theme**

It has been pointed out before that Canaan is a type of the Christian's inheritance in Christ. Canaan is not a picture of heaven, because the believer does not have to battle to gain his heavenly home. Canaan represents God's inheritance, given to the believer and claimed by faith. The victorious Christian life is a life of battles and blessings, but it is also a life of rest. In Heb. 4–5 we see that the entering of the nation into Canaan is a picture of the believer entering into a life of rest and victory through faith in Christ. Too

many Christians are “in between” in their spiritual lives—between Egypt and Canaan. They have been delivered from the bondage of sin, but they have not by faith entered into the inheritance of rest and victory. How to enter and claim this inheritance is the theme of Joshua.

## **II. Joshua the Man**

Joshua was born in Egyptian slavery. His father was Nun, of the tribe of Ephraim (1 Chron. 7:20–27); we know nothing about his mother. Originally his name was Oshea or Hoshea, which means “salvation,” but Moses changed it to Jehoshua (or Joshua), which means “Jehovah is salvation” (Num. 13:16). He was a slave in Egypt and served as Moses’ minister during the journeys of the nation (Ex. 24:13). He also led the army in the battle against Amalek (Ex. 17), and was one of the two spies who had the faith to enter Canaan when the nation rebelled in unbelief (Num. 14:6ff). As a result of his faith, he (with Caleb) was permitted to enter the Promised Land. Jewish tradition says that Joshua was eighty-five years old when he took Moses’ place at the head of the nation. Joshua 1–12 (the conquest of the land) covers roughly the next seven years; he spent the remainder of his life dividing up the inheritance and ruling the nation. He died at 110 (Josh. 24:29). The NT makes it clear that Joshua is a type of Christ (Heb. 4:8, where “Jesus” (kjv) should be translated “Joshua”). The name “Jesus” in Greek is equivalent to “Joshua”; both mean “God’s salvation” or “Jehovah is the Savior.” Just as Joshua conquered earthly foes, so Christ has defeated every enemy through His death and resurrection. It was Joshua, not Moses (representing Law), who brought Israel into Canaan, and it is Jesus who leads us into spiritual rest and victory. As Joshua assigned the tribes their inheritance so Christ has given us our inheritance (Eph. 1:3ff).

## **III. The Defeated Nations**

Those who oppose the inspiration of the Bible enjoy attacking the passages in Joshua that tell about war and slaughter (6:21, for example). “How can a God of love command such bloodshed?” they ask. Keep in mind that God had given these nations hundreds of years to repent (Gen. 15:16–21), yet they refused to turn from their filthy ways. If you wish to know what “the doings of Canaan” were, read Lev. 18, and keep in mind that these immoral practices were a part of heathen religious worship! Any sinner in the nation (such as Rahab, Josh. 2 and 6:22–27) could be saved by faith; and there was adequate warning sent ahead (read Josh. 2:8–13). God sometimes uses war to chasten and even to destroy nations that forget Him. God had these wicked nations destroyed to punish them for their sins and, something like a doctor who disinfects his instruments to kill the germs, to protect His people from their evil ways.

## Joshua 1–2

“God buries His workmen, but His work goes on.” Israel has finished mourning for Moses, and now God speaks to Joshua concerning his responsibilities as the new leader of the nation.

### I. The Commission to Joshua (1)

#### A. God speaks to Joshua (vv. 1–9).

God had chosen Joshua to be Moses' successor as far back as the battle with Amalek (Ex. 17:8–16; note v. 14). Moses was told to remind Joshua, and write it in his book, that Amalek would be exterminated. In Num. 27:15ff God instructed Moses to “ordain” Joshua; and in Deut. 31:7ff, Moses gave a final word of blessing and encouragement to his successor. It must have fortified Joshua greatly to know that he was called of God, for he had a tremendous task ahead of him.

Notice that God gives every encouragement to Joshua: (1) the promise of the land, vv. 2–4; (2) the promise of His presence, v. 5; and (3) the assurance that God would keep His word, vv. 6–9. It is interesting to study the verbs God uses: “the land which I do give ...” (v. 2); “... that have I given” (v. 3); “... to this people you shall divide ...” (nkjv, v. 6). He had already given them the land; all they had to do was step out by faith and claim it! God has already given us “every blessing of the Spirit” in Christ (Eph. 1:3). All we need do is step out by faith and possess our possessions.

As God was with Moses, so He would be with Joshua: “I will not leave you nor forsake you” (v. 5). This promise was repeated to Solomon (1 Chron. 28:20), and is given to us in Heb. 13:5–6. Leaders change, and times change, but God changes not. Notice that courage is demanded in the Christian life (vv. 6–7, 9), but this courage is supplied by the Word of God (v. 8). Moses had been writing “the Book of the Law” (Ex. 17:14; 24:4–7; Num. 33:2; Deut. 31:9–13), and this Book was now given to Joshua. He was to read the Book, meditate upon it night and day, and obey its commands. See Pss. 1:1–3 and 119:15. If Joshua was able to conquer Canaan having only the first five books of the Bible, how much more ought we to overcome now that we have a complete Bible!

#### B. Joshua speaks to the people (vv. 10–15).

We have here a “spiritual chain of command.” God commanded Joshua (v. 9); Joshua commanded the leaders (v. 10); the leaders were to command the people (v. 11). This is spiritual leadership under the command of God, and this same pattern ought to prevail in the NT church. Joshua told the leaders what God had told him, and they quickly passed the message along to their people. Three days later, they would cross the Jordan and enter the Promised Land, and they had to prepare for the event. “Three days” suggests resurrection—the nation was about to have a new beginning in a new land. The three tribes that were singled out had chosen to live on the other side of

Jordan (see Num. 32:16–24), but they had promised to help conquer the land before claiming their own inheritance. Joshua reminded them of their obligation.

*C. The people speak to Joshua (vv. 16–18).*

How wonderful it is when God's people honor God by respecting and following their spiritual leaders. See Deut. 34:9. Unlike the carnal Christians at Corinth (1 Cor. 1:11–17), they did not divide up into groups, with the followers of dead Moses opposing the followers of Joshua. They all followed the Lord! Note their prayer for Joshua in v. 17 and their encouragement in v. 18. Joshua had seen their division and heard their murmuring years before. How grateful he must have been for this spirit of harmony!

## **II. The Covenant with Rahab (2)**

Archaeologists have done a great deal of research at Jericho. They tell us the city covered about eight acres, with inner and outer walls surrounding the city. The inner wall was twelve feet thick, the outer wall six feet thick, and there were houses upon the walls (v. 15). The walls stood about thirty feet high, and excavations show that these walls were “violently destroyed.” Of the many people who lived in Jericho, we know the name of only one—Rahab, the harlot (see Heb. 11:31; James 2:25). She pictures to us the spiritual history of the believer in Jesus Christ:

*A. She was a sinner.*

The sin in this case was moral impurity, but “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). It was not uncommon in that day for harlots to manage inns.

*B. She was under condemnation.*

Rahab's city had already been declared condemned by God; it was just a matter of time before the sentence of death would be executed. Everything and everyone in the city would be destroyed (6:21), whether the people “felt” condemned or not! Jericho is a picture of the condemned world today. The people could not feel confident and peaceful, for death was coming.

*C. She was given a period of grace.*

The city had been set aside for judgment for many years (Deut. 7:1–5, 23–24; 12:2–3). Genesis 15:13–16 reminds us that God waited 400 years before He permitted judgment to come to the land! Rahab and all the other residents of Jericho had heard about the Exodus from Egypt (Josh. 2:10), which had taken place forty years before. Joshua 4:19 and 5:10 add other days of waiting, leading up to the additional week that Israel marched around the city (6:14). How patient God is!

*D. She heard the Word of God.*

It was a message of judgment that Rahab heard, but it introduced her to the true God. Note how she calls God "the LORD" in her conversation.

*E. She believed the Word.*

"Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom. 10:17, nkjv). It is faith that saves the sinner, even the most ungodly (Rom. 4:5). We are told in Heb. 11:31 that Rahab was saved by faith. Note that her assurance came from the Word: "I know that the Lord has given you the land" (v. 9, nkjv).

*F. She proved her faith by works.*

The fact that she risked her life to receive, hide, and protect the spies is proof that Rahab trusted God. She identified herself with God's people, not with the heathen around her. See James 2:25.

*G. She sought to win others.*

Think of the risk Rahab was taking in sharing the Word with her family! When people trust Christ, their first desire will be to share it with others, especially their own family (John 1:35–42; Mark 5:18–20).

*H. She was delivered from judgment.*

There was a two-fold judgment on the city: first, the shaking that destroyed the city; then, the fire that destroyed all its contents. Rahab's house was on the wall (2:15), but apparently that section of the wall did not fall! After Rahab and her loved ones were taken from her house, Joshua commanded the rest of the city to be destroyed with fire. Rahab and her family may have been troubled when things began to shake, but they were perfectly safe in the hands of God (6:22–25). Christians today see the world shaking all about them, but they can be sure God will rescue them before He sends His fiery judgment on the world (1 Thes. 1:10; 5:9).

*I. She went to a wedding.*

In Matt. 1:5, we find Rahab included by marriage in the Jewish nation and named as an ancestress of the Messiah! While the people of Jericho suffered death, Rahab and her family were to enjoy a marriage feast! See Rev. 19:7–9 and 17–19. Rahab was saved by faith, not by character or by religious works. This is the only way God saves people (Eph. 2:8–9). Have you trusted Jesus as Rahab trusted Joshua?

## **Joshua 3–5**

### **I. The Miracle of the Crossing (3)**

*A. The people sanctified (vv. 1–5).*

Like our NT Joshua (Mark 1:35), Joshua arose early in the morning to meditate on the Word (1:8; 3:1) and to prepare himself for the day's duties. It was not left for Joshua to invent a method of crossing the flooded Jordan, for God gave him all the instructions necessary. The key word in this chapter is *ark*, used ten times. Of course, the ark symbolized the presence of God. The ark went before the people to lead them, and it was kept in the midst of the river until all the nation had passed over. Christ always goes before His people and opens the way, but the people must sanctify themselves (see 2 Cor. 7:1) and be ready for God's leading. God was going to lead the Jews in a new way (v. 4), and they had to be ready.

*B. Joshua magnified (vv. 6–8).*

Of course, to God all the glory is due, but God sees fit to magnify His servants that their people might honor them (1 Chron. 29:25; 2 Chron. 1:1; see Josh 4:14). It was Joshua who commanded the priests and gave directions to the leaders for the people. God's people ought to magnify Christ (Phil. 1:20–21), but God also delights in magnifying His people when they obey Him (Acts 5:12–13).

*C. The Lord glorified (vv. 9–13).*

At the Exodus, God had proved Himself LORD and the true God beside whom the gods of Egypt were but harmless idols. Now God would prove Himself the "Lord of all the earth" (vv. 11, 13; see Ps. 97:5; Micah 4:13). All the gods of the heathen nations would fall before Him! God would prove His power by holding back the waters of the flooded Jordan and permitting His people to cross over on dry land.

*D. The Word verified (vv. 14–17).*

It happened just as God said it would! The priests went before, bearing the ark, and when they dipped their feet into the water, God opened the river before them! (Sometimes God's people have to "get their feet wet" by faith before God goes to work! See Josh. 1:2–3.) The priests then walked to the midst of the river and stood there while all Israel passed over to the other side. Then they followed to the opposite side themselves. What a perfect picture of Christ! He goes before us to open the way; He stands with us until we cross over; and He follows behind to protect us! God kept His Word as His people trusted Him and obeyed Him.

It is instructive to contrast the crossing of the Red Sea (Ex. 14–15) and the crossing of the Jordan. The first crossing illustrates separation from the past (Egypt, the world), while the second crossing pictures entrance by faith into our spiritual inheritance in Christ. The enemy was defeated once and for all when the Egyptian army was drowned in the Red Sea, but the Jews had to win one victory after another when they crossed Jordan and entered Canaan. On the cross, Jesus defeated our enemies, but we have to walk and war by faith if we are to have daily victory. We "cross the Jordan" when we enter by faith into the victory experience of Rom. 6–8.

## II. The Memorials of the Crossing (4)

There were two piles of stones built: one by the twelve chosen men on the bank of the river (3:12; 4:1–8), and one by Joshua in the midst of the river (4:9–10). They were to be memorials of the crossing, and to us they convey wonderful spiritual truths.

The twelve stones on the bank of the Jordan came out of the midst of the river (v. 8) as evidence that God did part the waters and take His people safely across. The twelve stones hidden in the midst of the river could be seen only by God, but they too spoke of Israel's marvelous crossing. These two piles of stones picture Christ's death and burial (the hidden stones), and resurrection (the stones on the bank). At the same time, they illustrate the believer's spiritual union with Christ: when He died, we died with Him; we were buried with Him; we arose with Him in victory! See Eph. 2:1–10; Gal. 2:20; Col. 2:13; Rom. 6:4–5. Today the church has two memorials of this great truth: (1) baptism reminds us that the Spirit of God has baptized us into Christ, 1 Cor. 12:13; (2) the Lord's Supper points back to His death and ahead to His coming again.

The Jews could not get victory in Canaan and overcome the enemy without first going through Jordan. Nor can Christians today overcome their spiritual foes unless they die to self, reckon themselves crucified with Christ, and allow the Spirit to give them resurrection power. Review *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament* on Romans 5–8 for the NT explanation of this truth.

## III. The Mark of the Covenant (5)

The Jews were no sooner safe on the other side than God commanded them to receive the mark of the covenant, circumcision (Gen. 17). Collectively as a nation they had gone through the experience of "death" in crossing the river. Now they were to apply that "death to self" individually.

Throughout the Bible, physical circumcision is always a picture of a spiritual truth. Unfortunately, the Jews made the physical rite more important than the spiritual truth it taught (see Rom. 2:25–29). Circumcision pictures putting off that which is sinful, and in the NT it illustrates putting off the "old man" of the flesh (Col. 3:1ff; Rom. 8:13). It is not enough for me to say, "I died with Christ"; I must make this truth practical in my daily life by "putting to death" the deeds of the flesh. The OT Jew put off but a small portion of his flesh. Through Christ, however, the NT Christian has put off "the body of the sins of the flesh" (Col. 2:9–13). This operation at Gilgal, then, is an illustration of the truth that each believer must live "crucified with Christ" (Gal. 2:20). The Jewish males had not received this mark of the covenant during their years of wandering in the wilderness, and for a very good reason: their unbelief had temporarily suspended their covenant relationship with God (Num. 14:32–34). When they refused to enter Canaan because of their unbelief, God "gave them up" to years of wandering until the old generation died. Now the new generation was to receive the mark of the covenant. "The reproach of Egypt" probably means the reproach the Egyptians (and other nations) heaped upon the Jews while they wandered in the wilderness (see Ex. 32:12ff; Deut. 9:24–29). Their unbelief did not glorify God, and the heathen nations said, "Your God is not strong enough to take you into Canaan!" Now God had taken them into the Promised Land, and the reproach was gone.

The new generation crossed Jordan, but they did not immediately attack Jericho. Many of today's Christians would have rushed right into battle! But God knew that His people needed to be prepared spiritually for the battle that lay ahead, so He caused them to wait and to rest. While waiting, they commemorated the Passover. It had been forty years before when the nation was delivered from Egypt on that first Passover night.

God gave them new food—the “produce” (old corn) of the land. The manna was food for the nation when they were pilgrims, but now they would be settling down in the land. See Deut. 6:10–11 and 8:3. The corn speaks of Christ in resurrection blessing, for the seed must be buried before there can be fruit (John 12:24). The order of events reminds us again of His death, burial, and resurrection—they kept the Passover (His death), and they ate the fruit of the land (resurrection).

The main lesson of these chapters is clear: there can be no conquest without death to self (crossing the Jordan) and identification with Christ's resurrection (the two memorials of stone). Before the Jews could get victory over the enemy, they had to experience victory over sin and self.

## Joshua 6

Israel's conquest of this mighty city is an illustration of several practical spiritual truths: (1) It is faith that overcomes obstacles, Heb. 11:30 and 1 John 5:4; (2) The weapons we use are spiritual, 2 Cor. 10:4; (3) Christ is the victor and we can trust Him fully, John 16:33. Christians face many “Jerichos” in daily life, and often they are tempted to give up, as the spies did at Kadesh (Num. 13:28ff). But no wall is too high or too strong for the Lord. By faith we win the victory and claim the inheritance!

### I. The Captain of the Host (5:13–6:5)

Jericho was a closed city. Joshua stood by the city and saw a man there with a drawn sword. Fearlessly, Joshua asked the man to declare himself, and he discovered that the Man was the Lord of Hosts! This is the “battle” title of the Lord; it speaks of His supreme command of the hosts (armies) of Israel and of heaven. See Pss. 24:10 and 46:7, 11; 1 Kings 18:15; Isa. 8:11–14; Hag. 2:4; James 5:4. Jesus Christ had come down to direct the battle, and Joshua was quick to acknowledge His leadership. The first step toward victory is to confess that you are second in command.

There can be no victory for the Lord in public unless we experience worship of the Lord in private. Joshua fell on his face in worship; he took off his shoes in humility; and he turned all his plans over to his Commander when he said, “What does my Lord say to His servant?” As Christian soldiers (2 Tim. 2:3; Eph. 6:10ff), we must submit to Christ and listen to His orders in the Word. Christ gave to Joshua the exact orders for overcoming the city (6:2–5), and all he had to do was obey by faith. “I have given Jericho to you!” Christ promised. But the people had to step out by faith and claim the victory.



The armed men were to lead the procession (vv. 3, 7), with seven priests following with trumpets (v. 4). The ark was to follow (vv. 4, 7), and then the rest of the people ("the rereward") finished the procession (v. 9). The procession was to march around Jericho once a day for six days in absolute silence except for the trumpets blowing (v. 10). On the seventh day, they were to march around seven times (making a total of thirteen marches), and on the seventh march they were to blow the trumpets and shout. What a strange plan for fighting a war! But God's ways are not our ways, and He uses what the world calls "foolish" to confound the mighty (1 Cor. 1:26–31).

God has outlined for us in His Word all we need to know about spreading the Gospel and conquering the enemy. Sad to say, too many Christians (and churches) invent their own plans, borrowing man-made schemes from the world, and their efforts ultimately fail. If we will listen to our Captain's orders and obey them, He will give the victory.

## **II. The Capture of the City (6:6–25)**

It is easy to see why Israel was victorious over the enemy:

### *A. They obeyed their leaders (vv. 6–9).*

We noted God's "spiritual chain of command" in Josh. 1, and here we see it in operation. The people respectfully listened to God's Word from their leaders and obeyed what God commanded. They manifested unity, cooperation, and singleness of mind in the ranks; and God gave them the victory.

### *B. They had patience and faith (vv. 10–14).*

Could God have delivered the city to Joshua on the first day? Certainly! But the requirement of six days of marching (during which the people were not allowed to talk) was a great means of discipline for the nation. Faith and patience go together (Heb. 6:11–15). Maintaining silence and waiting for God's appointed time also required discipline. James 3:1–2 teaches us that people who can control their speech are mature in the faith; also see Prov. 16:32.

### *C. They trusted God for the impossible (vv. 15–16).*

Who ever heard of taking a city using weapons like shouts and trumpets? But the ark (representing Christ's presence) was with them, and this meant that God would do the work. With God, all things are possible. See Jer. 33:3.

### *D. They obeyed Him in every detail (vv. 17–25).*

The loot of the city was to be "devoted to God" (accursed, consecrated); the animals and citizens were to be slain; Rahab and her family were to be saved alive. Sometimes we obey God before the battle, but (like Achan, chap. 7) disobey Him after the victory. God gave the Jews a total victory over Jericho because they trusted His Word. Note

that Rahab and her family were taken out of the city before the fire was lit. See 1 Thes. 1:10; 5:9.

As you read the Book of Acts, you see how God's "spiritual army" conquered one city after another by faith. Even the mighty city of Rome fell before the power of the Gospel! Today, God's people again need to learn how to capture cities, and this chapter tells us how.

### **III. The Curse of the Lord (6:26–27)**

The "them" in v. 26 probably means the people who were saved alive, for they might be tempted to rebuild their city. Just as some of the Jews wanted to go back to Egypt, so some of Rahab's family might want to go back to Jericho. For this reason, God put a special curse on the city and on any man who would rebuild it. See Deut. 13:15–18.

This curse was fulfilled in 1 Kings 16:34. During the reign of wicked King Ahab, a man named Hiel of Bethel rebuilt Jericho. When he laid the foundation, he lost his firstborn son; and when he set up the gates, he lost his youngest son. What a sacrifice to make for a city! How foolish people are to defy God's Word and rebel against His will!

Jericho figures in the NT in several places. The man in the Parable of the Good Samaritan was going from Jerusalem to Jericho (Luke 10). Zacchaeus was of Jericho (Luke 19:1–10); and in that city, Christ healed blind Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46–52). The NT Jericho was not on the site of the OT city, but was a completely new city known for its beauty.

Some practical points to consider as we face our own "Jerichos":

*A. The soldier who wants to fight the best must bow the lowest before the battle (5:13–15).*

We win our battles on our knees and on our faces before the Lord.

*B. No one can take a city alone.*

Joshua had the loyal cooperation of the priests and people, and together they overcame the enemy.

*C. When we follow God's methods, He wins the battle and He gets the glory.*

This is why He uses such "foolish methods." When we use our own schemes and systems, we might get the glory but the victory never lasts.

*D. Unbelief looks at the walls and giants (Num. 13:28ff), but faith looks to the Lord.*

"Obstacles are those nasty little things we see when we take our eyes off the goal." And, we might add, when we take our eyes off the Lord. God's commandments are God's enablements.

*E. We see the grace of God at work even in judgment, for Rahab and her family were saved by faith.*

Is there a suggestion here that “few will be saved” when God’s judgment finally does fall on this world?

## Joshua 7–9

Joshua’s military strategy was to cut across Canaan and divide the land, beginning at Jericho and continuing with Ai, Bethel, and Gibeon. He then would conquer the southern cities and complete his conquest by defeating the northern cities. However, he experienced a setback at Ai and was deceived by the leaders of Gibeon.

### I. The Disobedience of Achan (7)

#### A. Defeat (vv. 1–5).

God had made it clear that the spoils of Jericho were to be “devoted” or dedicated to Him and placed in His treasury (6:18–19), but Achan had disobeyed this law. It is possible that Joshua was too hasty in his attack on Ai, that he did not wait for the Lord’s direction. Furthermore, he acted upon the suggestions of the spies rather than on God’s Word. Later, God rejected the plan given by the spies (compare 7:3 with 8:1). There is a hint of overconfidence in these verses: Jericho had fallen to Israel, and they were confident that the smaller city of Ai would be a “pushover.” Self-confidence, dependence on human wisdom, impatience, lack of prayer, and a secret sin were behind Israel’s defeat at Ai.

#### B. Discouragement (vv. 6–9).

The hearts of the Jews melted (v. 5) instead of the hearts of the enemy melting (Josh. 2:11). Joshua and his leaders spent the whole day in prayer before the ark, and even Joshua wanted to “back up” and settle for an inheritance on the other side of Jordan! Note, however, that Joshua was more concerned about the glory of the Lord and the testimony of Israel before the heathen nations, than he was about the discouragement of the defeat. It is a mark of true spirituality when God’s glory is what motivates a servant’s life.

#### C. Discovery (vv. 10–18).

God spoke sternly to His servant: “Get up! Israel has sinned!” Of course, only one man had sinned, but this involved the entire nation (v. 1; 1 Cor. 12:12ff). It is a solemn truth that one person’s disobedience can cause the sorrow and failure of a whole nation, family, or church. Achan thought he could hide his sin, but God saw what he did. And because an “accursed thing” was in the camp, God could not dwell with His people. This

caused their defeat at Ai. Joshua and the high priest perhaps used the Urim and Thummim to determine the culprit (Ex. 28:30), or they may have cast lots. "Be sure your sin will find you out!" Achan was discovered and his sin exposed.

#### *D. Destruction (vv. 19–26).*

"I have sinned!" confessed Achan, explaining how he "saw ... coveted ... and took" the spoils from Jericho (see Gen. 3:6). Undoubtedly the members of his household knew about the loot and were sharing in his sin. All of them had to be judged for their disobedience, so the people took them to the valley and stoned them. That place was called the "Valley of Achor" (trouble) in memory of the trouble Achan had brought to the people. Hosea 2:15 promises that God will make the Valley of Achor "a door of hope" for the Jews. Certainly Israel has been in the "valley of trouble" because of her rejection of Christ, but one day the nation will turn to Him and find hope.

### **II. The Destruction of Ai (8:1–29)**

Now that the nation had been sanctified (7:13) and their sin judged, God could again lead His people to victory. Note how the Lord used the defeat to good advantage, for the people of Ai were confident that they could overcome Israel again. Note too that God allowed the people to take the loot from Ai. Had Achan waited but a few days, he would have had all the wealth he could have carried! Read Matt. 6:33.

The plan was a simple one. Joshua sent 30,000 men to Bethel at night (v. 3), and placed another five thousand between Bethel and Ai (v. 12). Some of the soldiers attacked Ai and drew the men out of the city. At that point Joshua signaled the ambush, and his men entered the city and captured it. It was a complete victory! Joshua holding up his spear in v. 26 reminds us of Moses holding up his hands when Joshua fought Amalek (Ex. 17:8ff). Ai was made such a desolation that archaeologists cannot be certain of its location even today.

### **III. The Declaration of the Law (8:30–35)**

Joshua interrupted his military campaign to take the nation thirty miles to Shechem where he obeyed the commandments of Deut. 27:4–6. We are told that this valley is a natural amphitheater with wonderful acoustics. Joshua put the tribes of Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali on Mt. Ebal (the mount of the curses); and he put Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin on Mt. Gerizim (the mount of blessing). Joshua well knew that Israel's victory and possession of the land depended on their obedience to the Word of God. It was more important for the nation to hear the Word than to fight any more battles. Note that he also built an altar (vv. 30–31), for apart from the blood of Christ, we have no righteousness before God. The Law would have condemned and slain them had they neglected the sacrifices. We must admire and imitate Joshua's respect for the Word of God (see 1:8; 24:26–27; also 23:14).

### **IV. The Deception of the Gibeonites (9)**

The heathen tribes of Canaan were divided into many little “nations” (city-states) with key cities as their centers. They usually fought each other, but when God’s people arrived, these petty kings united to oppose Israel. It is amazing how enemies unite against God! However, the people at Gibeon, the next city to be taken, decided to use deceit instead of force. (Satan is both a lion and a serpent.) They dressed themselves to appear like men who had been on a long journey, with old sacks, patched (clouted) shoes, and moldy food, and their plan worked. God had commanded Israel to make no covenant with the nations in Canaan (Deut. 7), but the Gibeonites knew that if they did get a covenant, Israel would keep it. They lied when they said they came from a far country. Note also that they said nothing about Israel’s victories at Jericho and Ai.

Joshua and his leaders failed to seek God’s mind in the matter; instead, they judged by appearances. The Gibeonites’ story sounded reasonable; the food and clothing certainly seemed to be old and worn out; and everything appeared to be in order. Consequently, Joshua made a pact with the men and then discovered that they were from Gibeon! Three days later, Israel came to Gibeon and its allied cities (v. 17), but they could not attack them because of their promise. This caused murmuring among the people, who probably wanted more spoils. But God’s people could not go back on their word. All Israel could do was make slaves out of the Gibeonites—they put them to work cutting wood and drawing water for the tabernacle service. At least they made their mistakes work for them!

What Jericho could not do with walls, or Ai with weapons, the Gibeonites accomplished with deceit. Satan tries one device after another to defeat God’s people, and we must constantly be on guard. Note that it is usually after a great victory that Satan begins his subtle attacks. It was after the victory at Jericho that Israel was defeated by Ai, and it was after Israel’s defeat of Ai that Joshua was deceived by Gibeon. We must beware of “judging after the flesh” (John 8:15) and depending on our own wisdom (Prov. 3:5–6). James 1:5 promises that God will give us wisdom if we ask for it. Christians must beware of worldly alliances (2 Cor. 6:14–18). We shall see in chapter 10 that Joshua was forced to defend his enemies because of his hasty covenant. Moses warned Israel in Deut. 7 that friendship with these heathen nations would only lead Israel into sin, and that is what happened.

## Joshua 14–15

Caleb stands out in the Bible as a great hero of faith. Six times we are told that he “wholly followed the Lord” (Num. 14:24; 32:12; Deut. 1:36; Joshua 14:8–9, 14). Caleb was “an overcomer” (1 John 2:13–14 and 5:4), a man who surrendered wholly to the Lord and fully obeyed His Word. We may trace his spiritual history in four stages.

### I. Caleb the Sufferer

Since Caleb was forty years old at Kadesh-barnea (Josh. 14:7), he had to have been born in Egypt while the Jews were enduring great suffering (Ex. 1–2). He was born a

slave, yet he died a hero! His parentage is given in Josh. 14:13–14. Some think that Caleb (whose name means “dog”) was of mixed parentage, his father being a Kenezite and his mother from the tribe of Judah (Josh. 15:13). If so, this makes his faith an even greater wonder! However, 1 Chron. 2:18 makes Caleb the son of Hezron, a descendant of Pharez (1 Chron. 2:5); and this would put him in the ancestry of Christ (Matt. 1:3). In either case, Caleb was redeemed by the blood of the Passover lamb, delivered from Egypt, and given the prospects of a great inheritance in Canaan. He would have had no inheritance under Joshua had he not first experienced redemption under Moses.

## **II. Caleb the Defender (Num. 13–14)**

The rebellion of Israel at Kadesh-barnea has already been discussed in previous studies. The nation had been out of Egypt about two years when they arrived at the entrance to Canaan. Instead of believing God's Word and immediately claiming their inheritance, they asked for a report from twelve spies (Deut. 1:21ff). Caleb and Joshua were among those spies, which shows the position of confidence they held in the nation. When the report was given, only Caleb and Joshua defended Moses and encouraged the nation to enter Canaan. The ten spies despised the land (14:36), while Caleb and Joshua delighted in the land. The nation wanted to go back; the two men of faith wanted to go ahead. The majority was walking by sight; the minority was walking by faith. The rebellious nation saw only the obstacles, the problems; the believing leaders saw the opportunities, the prospects. What was the result? The ten spies and the unbelieving generation died in the wilderness! But Caleb and Joshua lived to enter and enjoy the Promised Land. “To be carnally minded is death” (Rom. 8:6). It took courage for Caleb to stand against the whole nation, but God honored him for it.

## **III. Caleb the Wanderer**

Caleb did not die in the wilderness, but he still had to suffer with the unbelieving nation during their nearly forty years of wandering. Think of what this godly, believing man had to endure! Every single day he saw people die and miss out on their inheritance. He had to listen to the murmuring and complaining. This man of faith had to put up with the unbelief of his fellow Israelites. He loved Moses, yet he had to listen to the Jews as they criticized their leader and opposed him.

How was Caleb able to maintain his spiritual life when surrounded by so much carnality and unbelief? His heart was in Canaan! God had given him a wonderful inheritance (read Josh. 14:9–12), and though his body was in the wilderness, his heart and mind were in Canaan! He is a perfect illustration of Col. 3:1–4. He possessed what Rom. 8:6 refers to as “the spiritual mind.” Caleb was able to endure the trials of the wilderness because he knew that he did not have to fear death, that he had an inheritance, and that God would not fail him. How much more we have in Christ! Yet we give up so easily and fail in our pilgrim journey.

## **IV. Caleb the Conqueror**

This brings us to our study of Joshua 14–15. Joshua is giving each tribe its special inheritance, and Caleb comes to claim his share. He reminds Joshua of God's promise (14:6–9), for it is only on the basis of God's Word that we can claim our blessings. Note the glorious testimony of strength Caleb gives (14:10–11). The person of faith is the person with strength. Forty-five years after the nation's failure at Kadesh-barnea, Caleb is eighty-five years old, yet he is anxious to claim his inheritance to the glory of God. It is sad when believers allow "old age" to make complainers out of them when they ought (like Caleb) to be conquerors.

"Give me this mountain!" (14:12) Caleb was a man of spiritual vision as well as spiritual vitality, and these two qualities led to spiritual victory. God had promised him the inheritance, and Caleb had faith that what God promised He was able to perform (see Rom. 4:20–21). Caleb was able to drive out the inhabitants of his inheritance (Josh. 15:13–14), the very "giants" that the ten unbelieving spies had feared (Num. 13:28, 33). Unbelief looks at the giants; faith looks to God. Unbelief depends on man's "common sense"; faith rests wholly on the Word of God.

Caleb's nephew Othniel helped him in one of his conquests (Josh. 15:15–17) and gained Caleb's daughter for a wife. This man later became the first judge of Israel (Jud. 3:9ff), and thus carried on the family leadership. Caleb's daughter illustrates a wonderful spiritual truth. After her marriage to Othniel, she returned to her father to ask for a further blessing (15:18–19). Caleb had given her a field, but she also wanted the springs of water to nourish the field. The Christian should joyfully continue to ask the Father for greater blessings, especially for the "spiritual springs" that water the fruitful life. The field that God gives us will never produce fruit apart from the springs of water (John 7:37–39).

What a difference it makes when believers "wholly follow the Lord" and exercise faith in the Word. Caleb's dedication and faith saved his life, gained him an inheritance, overcame the enemy, and enabled him to enrich his own family for years to come. The Lord certainly expects Christians today to be conquerors; in fact, Paul claims that we are "more than conquerors!" (Rom. 8:37) Joshua and Caleb conquered with physical weapons and claimed a material inheritance, but we conquer with spiritual weapons (2 Cor. 10:3–5) to claim our spiritual inheritance in Christ (Eph. 1:3). Christians are supposed to be overcomers through faith in Christ (1 John 5:4). We are to overcome the world (1 John 5:5), false doctrine (1 John 4:1–4), and the wicked one (1 John 2:13–14). Christ has already overcome Satan (Luke 11:21–22) and the world (John 16:33), so that we need only to claim His victory by faith. Note in the letters to the seven churches (Rev. 2–3) the many promises to those who overcome. "He who overcomes shall inherit all things!" promises Rev. 21:7 (nkjv).

We overcome the enemy and claim the inheritance the same way as Caleb: (1) we must be wholly yielded to the Lord; (2) we must know His promises and believe them; (3) we must keep heart and mind fixed on the inheritance; (4) we must depend on God to give the victory. "Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!" (1 Cor. 15:57, nkjv)

## Joshua 23–24

We commonly think of Joshua as a great soldier, and he was; but here we see him as a great shepherd with a loving concern for his people. He had served the Lord and the nation faithfully; now he was concerned lest the people depart from the Lord and lose their inheritance. This was the same concern Peter had before he died (2 Peter 1:12–15) and also the Apostle Paul (Acts 20:13ff). How tragic it is when one generation sacrifices to obtain God's blessing and a new generation comes along and loses everything.

### I. Joshua's Address to the Leaders (23)

Joshua called the leaders of the tribes together, probably at Shiloh (18:1). He wanted to instill in his leaders a sincere devotion to the Lord. He would die, but they would be left to carry on the work. Joshua wants them to be faithful to their God.

#### A. *A review of the past (vv. 3–4).*

These men had seen the wonders of the Lord, from the crossing of Jordan to that present day. Note how Joshua gives God all the glory for what had been achieved: The Lord fought the battles; all Joshua did was divide the land! It is good for us to remember what God has done for us.

#### B. *A promise for the future (v. 5).*

God's workers change, but His Word remains the same. Joshua assures them that God will continue to fight for them and give them victory over their enemies.

#### C. *A responsibility for the present (vv. 6–16).*

What God does for His people depends often on what the people do for God. Joshua reminds them of their responsibilities as the people of God, and his words take us back to Moses' warnings in Deut. 7–11. The key word here is *nations*, used seven times in vv. 3–13. Israel must beware of the heathen nations in the land. The only way Israel could ever hope to gain the land and claim their inheritance was by obeying the Law of God (see Josh. 1:7–8). It would take courage to trust the Word and oppose the enemy, but God would enable them.

Joshua's main concern was that Israel be a separated people and not mingle with the heathen nations. Verse 7 (nkjv) presents the negative ("Lest you go among these nations") and v. 8 the positive ("But you shall hold fast to the Lord"). How foolish it would be to worship the gods of a defeated enemy! If Israel would be separated unto the Lord, God would enable one man to do the work of a thousand! (v. 10) They had to cleave either to the Lord or to the heathen nations (v. 11–12); but if they mingled with the heathen, God would remove His blessings from them. The principle here in verse 13



applies to all believers: any sins we allow to remain in our lives become traps and thorns to us.

We cannot help but notice Joshua's emphasis on the Word of God (vv. 6, 14). "There has not failed one word of all His good promise!" (See 1 Kings 8:56, nkjv.) To obey His Word means victory and blessing; to disobey it means defeat and trial. See Josh. 1:8.

## **II. Joshua's Appeal to the People (24:1–28)**

After exhorting the leaders, Joshua calls all the people together at Shechem, a place dear to the heart of Israel since it was at Shechem that God first promised the land to Abraham (Gen. 12:6–7). Here also, Jacob built an altar (Gen. 33:20), and he exhorted his family to put away their idols (Gen. 35:1–4). While there are no "holy places" on earth, there are places that arouse sacred memories to the believer.

Joshua was concerned lest the people lapse into idolatry because of the influence of the heathen nations around them. Israel was prone to worship idols, and Joshua knew that idolatry would cause them to forfeit their inheritance. So, he uses several arguments to encourage them to devote themselves wholly to the Lord.

### *A. God's goodness in the past (vv. 2–13).*

Joshua goes all the way back to the birth of the nation in the call of Abraham. Abraham and his father were idolaters until God called them in His grace. ("On the other side of the flood" means "over the Euphrates River." See also vv. 14–15.) God called Abraham, not because of his goodness, for he was a heathen man, but because of God's grace and love. God gave the land to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God protected the Jews in Egypt and then delivered them by His mighty hand. He led them and provided for them in the wilderness. He defeated nations for their sake. He brought them over the Jordan River into the Promised Land and drove out the enemies before them. What more could God have done for His people! Now they had claimed their inheritances and were enjoying the blessings of the land. How they ought to love and serve the Lord!

### *B. Joshua's own example (vv. 14–15).*

Israel had to serve some god—either the gods of the heathen or the true God, Jehovah. "As for me and my house," said Joshua, "we will serve the Lord!" It is not only encouraging but also essential that godly leaders set a good example in their own homes.

### *C. The danger of discipline (vv. 16–21).*

The people assure Joshua three times that they will serve the Lord (vv. 16, 21, 24). He knows that what is said by the lips is not always true in the heart. "If you continue with your idols," he warns, "then you cannot serve the Lord! He is a jealous God, a God who will not share His people with any other god." He warns them that idolatry will lead to chastening and discipline, and the loss of their land.

*D. The covenant with God (vv. 22–28).*

God had made a covenant with Israel at Sinai (see Ex. 20), and this covenant had been renewed by the new generation under Moses in Deuteronomy. But each generation needs to reaffirm its faithfulness to God, so Joshua renews the covenant with the people. He writes the words in the Book of the Law, and then sets up a stone to remind the people of their vows. This recalls to mind the stones set up when Israel crossed Jordan (chap. 4). We are so prone to forget that God has to use reminders (such as the Lord's Supper) to keep His people in the path of obedience. Even with the reminders, in the years that followed, the Jews failed to keep their covenant with God. Read Jud. 21:25 for the sad report.

**III. Joshua's Achievement for the Lord (24:29–33)**

Verse 31 is a great testimonial for this man of God—because of his leadership, the nation served the Lord and continued to serve Him even after he was dead. Joshua had been used of God to achieve many things for Israel. He had led them across Jordan; he had led them from victory to victory in the land; he had given them their inheritance. Certainly the tomb of Joshua was another reminder to Israel of the power and mercy of the Lord. It is right for God's people to remember godly leaders and to imitate their faith (Heb. 13:7–8).

Three burials are recorded in these verses: Joshua's, Joseph's, and Eleazar's. Joseph's brothers had promised to bury his remains in Canaan (Gen. 50:25), so the Jews had carried his coffin out of Egypt (Ex. 13:19). This is a picture of our future resurrection, for just as Joseph's body was redeemed from Egypt, so our bodies will be one day not only at rest in their rightful home, but also transformed to be like the body of Jesus Christ (Phil. 3:20–21). It is easy to believe that Joseph's grave would also be a reminder to the people of the faithfulness of God. Joseph had been used to keep the nation alive in famine, and he had been faithful to the Lord even in the heathen land of Egypt.

As we close this book, let us remember that Christ is our Joshua (Savior), and that He fights our battles for us and helps us claim the inheritance.