

Survey of Joshua

Spring 2021

DATE	READING	SUBJECT
April 7	Exodus 17:10-14, Numbers 14, Deuteronomy 31	An introduction to Joshua
April 14	Joshua 1	Joshua's Commission
April 21	Joshua 2	Rahab the Harlot
April 28	Joshua 3-4	Crossing the Jordan
May 5	Joshua 5-6	The Fall of Jericho
May 12	Joshua 7-8	Sin in the Camp
May 19	Joshua 9	The Gibeonites
May 26	Joshua 10-12	Defeating the Nations
June 2	Joshua 13-19	Inheritances of Israel
June 9	Joshua 20	Cities of Refuge
June 16	Joshua 21-22	The Mistaken Altar
June 23	Joshua 23	Joshua's Final Speech (pt 1)
June 30	Joshua 24	Joshua's Final Speech (pt 2)

CLASS 1
READING: Exodus 17, Numbers 14, Deuteronomy 31

BACKGROUND OF JOSHUA

Joshua the son of Nun was of the tribe of Ephraim. He is first mentioned in Exodus 17, and becomes more and more important as the story of Israel progresses. Joshua is one of the few men allowed to enter the Promised Land. Thus he is at least 60 years old at the conclusion of the book of Deuteronomy.

QUESTIONS

- 1) What was Joshua's original name (Numbers 13)?
- 2) When we first meet Joshua (Ex. 17) what was his position or duty?
- 3) The closing words of Deuteronomy (Deut. 34:9-12) contrast Moses and Joshua. In what ways were they alike? In what ways were they different?

THE MAN JOSHUA

To study the life of Joshua is to study personal character and integrity. He has a consistent pattern of Godliness and righteous character that is worthy of emulation. Joshua is also worth noting as a great war leader. Finally, when we consider Joshua's closing speech, we see true leadership of the home and of people

QUESTIONS

- 1) From the following events, what characteristics would you ascribe to Joshua:
 - His going with Moses to the top of Mt. Sinai (Ex. 24)
 - His seeking to rebuke people for prophesying outside the camp (Num. 11)
 - His report after spying out the land (Num. 14)?
- 2) What sins can you recall being committed by Joshua?

THE MANTEL OF LEADERSHIP

The last chapter of Deuteronomy speaks of the change of leadership of Moses to Joshua. In Numbers 17:18, God had already given Joshua part of the mantle of leadership.

QUESTIONS

- 1) What did God command Moses to do to Joshua in Deut. 3:28?
- 2) What might it feel like being Joshua and taking over from a leader like Moses?

LEARNING FROM JOSHUA

There are a number of things we hope to get out of a study of Joshua. As already mentioned, we want to look at Joshua as an example of what a leader in the home and the congregation would look like. But there are a number of important lessons aside from the personal character of Joshua to learn. The defeat of Jericho is an important lesson on a victory of faith. Rahab of Jericho is mentioned more times in the New Testament than Joshua. In some ways, the book of Joshua is all about spiritual warfare against the world. Some of the most important lessons of this warfare are found here; lessons such as "keep sin out of the camp", "test all things" and "one victory at a time".

CLASS 2

READING: Joshua 1

GOD SPEAKS TO JOSHUA

Joshua 1 begins with God reaffirming His commitment to Israel and to Joshua that He had promised Moses. God then tells Joshua that it is time to inherit the land, and that he is to now cross the river Jordan. God promises that the land will be theirs, and that they will defeat every enemy. However, this victory is not without conditions. God gives Joshua a number of commands and conditions that he must pursue in order to have this victory. Most important, the “Book of the Law”, which was only just finished in the last few months, must now be the thing that guides Joshua.

QUESTIONS

- 1) How is the land promise in Joshua 1:4 different than in Numbers 34:3-12?
- 2) What are some of the conditions and commands God puts to Joshua?
- 3) Why must one be “strong and courageous” in order to obey the law of God?
- 4) How is Joshua’s situation with the Law of Moses (i.e. that it had been completed) similar to our situation with the Law of Christ?

JOSHUA SPEAKS TO THE PEOPLE

Now Joshua turns to instruct the people for the first time as their leader. He tells them to prepare themselves for the beginning of the conquest. He then turns to the people of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh and reminds them of their pledge to Moses. They respond in a promise of loyalty to Joshua.

QUESTIONS

- 1) The people are going to possess the land. God has promised He will give it to them. Does this mean that they will not need to fight? To prepare provisions? What important idea does this teach us in regards to our spiritual warfare?
- 2) What had the Reubenites and Gadites asked of Moses? What condition had Moses placed on them?
- 3) What did the Reubenites and Gadites and Manassehites ask Joshua to do?

ASSUMING COMMAND

As we mentioned before, it must be difficult to assume the leadership from someone who was of the character of Moses. But there is also the issue of assuming the problems that Moses had as well. The people constantly provoked Moses. It makes one consider that one of the great burdens Joshua was taking was not just the conquest of Canaan, but dealing with contentious people.

- 1) Considering the problems the people made for Moses, how might Joshua have looked at taking on the responsibility of leadership?
- 2) What differences in the people were present from the time of Moses’ shepherding the Israelites and the time that Joshua takes charge? In other words, how had the people changed?

CLASS 3
READING: Joshua 2

THE TWO SPIES

Thirty eight years after Joshua had been a spy (and the calamity that event had resulted in) Joshua sends out two spies to the city of Jericho. It is soon discovered their presence and intention, and the king of Jericho sends word that the men (who are staying in a prostitutes home) are to be turned over to them.

QUESTIONS

- 1) What was the Mosaic law in regards to prostitution? What about the law of Christ?
- 2) What was the value in sending spies to the city?

RAHAB THE HARLOT

The spies have hidden in the home of Rahab, who at risk to herself hides them from the king. There is a case to be made that Rahab is more significant to the New Testament Christian than even Joshua. Rahab is mentioned more often in the New Testament (Matthew 1:5, Hebrews 11:31, James 2:25), and her place in the lineage of Jesus is significant as well.

Why is Rahab such a significant person? We are told that she is a model of the faith that we must have. Consider her situation: a Canaanite in a city that is doomed and a harlot on top of this. Yet she believes the God of Israel is the true God, and that if she spares the spies, she herself and her loved ones might be spared. Thus Rahab is spared from the destruction to come, as is her family.

QUESTIONS

- 1) What caused Rahab to believe in the God of Israel? What was her "confession" of faith?
- 2) What does Rahab tell the spies in regards to the situation in Jericho?
- 3) Why might she believe that God was merciful?
- 4) What was the sign that Rahab was to use for her home?
- 5) Who is Rahab's son?
- 6) How does the record of Rahab foreshadow the church of Christ?

THE SPIES REPORT

The spies now return to Joshua after having fled Jericho. Once they report, Joshua understands how God has delivered the land to them: the Fear of the Lord.

Class 4

READING: Joshua 3-4, Deuteronomy 27

CROSSING THE JORDAN

The events in chapter 3 take place three days after chapter one. Having prepared to enter the land, Joshua now gives the directives of God. The Ark of the Covenant was to lead off, and the children of Israel were to follow about one-half a mile behind. But something unusual is about to happen: God tells Joshua to have the priests bearing the Ark to actually stand in the Jordan River when they come to it. When they do step into it, the river is suddenly came to a halt upstream, and “stood in a heap” (Psalm 78:13, Psalm 114:3). Thus Israel entered the land on dry ground.

QUESTIONS

- 1) Why is it unusual that priests were carrying the Ark?
- 2) What action by the priests kept the water from coming?
- 3) What was this miracle meant to tell Israel?
- 4) Why is it that we often use the crossing of the Jordan River as a metaphor for death?

THE STONE MEMORIAL

Once the Israelites have crossed, Joshua instructs one man from each of the tribes (assumedly excluding Levi) to take up a stone and set it up as a memorial. Then Joshua himself set up a second memorial. One memorial would be carried into the land, and the other would be placed in their location. Both memorials (if indeed there are two) consisted of twelve stones; one for each of the landed tribes.

This was not a new command. In Deuteronomy 27 Moses told the Israelites to set up an altar of twelve stones on Mount Ebal. This seems to be a third memorial of stones from the Jordan (fulfilled in Joshua 8:30-32). One last point – in the latter part of Joshua, many years from here, the eastern tribes will build another memorial altar in this location, and it will nearly start a war between the tribes.

QUESTIONS

- 1) Where was the collected memorial ultimately placed?
- 2) Where did Joshua place his memorial? Why is this significant?
- 3) Why take the stones into their lodging for a night?
- 4) What did the memorial signify?
- 5) Can you think of any other memorials or altars made of 12 stones?
- 6) Why might the Levites not have a memorial stone?
- 7) What did Moses say in Deut. 27 was to be written on the stones?

Class 5
READING: Joshua 5-6

CIRCUMCISION AND PASSOVER

A new generation of men has arisen. We are specifically reminded that the forty years served as a time for the previous generation to pass away. But an important part of the covenant, circumcision, has not been enacted. God directs Joshua to use flint knives to circumcise the men of the nation. This accomplished, God declares that the reproach of Egypt has been removed.

Now comes the first Passover in the land. They are able to partake of the produce of the land of Canaan. Manna, no longer necessary, ceases at that moment.

QUESTIONS

- 1) Why flint knives?
- 2) What is circumcision in the covenant of Christ?
- 3) What was the reproach of Egypt?

COMMANDER OF THE ARMY OF THE LORD

After this Joshua is standing viewing Jericho when he sees a Man with a drawn sword standing apart from him. Asking the man for whom He stood, the Man declares neither, but that He stands for Jehovah. He identifies Himself as the Commander of the army of the Lord (Captain of the Host). Joshua understands that this is God (most likely Christ).

The Commander (who is now simply identified as Jehovah) relates to Joshua the plan of attack. The assault of the city is non-conventional; marching around the city once a day for six days. On the seventh day you are to march around it seven times, and then blow the horns of the priests. This would cause the city to fall.

QUESTIONS

- 1) What indications are there that the Commander is actually Jesus?

DESTRUCTION OF JERICO

The siege of Jericho had already begun, seeing that the city was shut up entirely. God commands the people to begin their seven day assault. Just as God said, they obeyed, and on the seventh day Joshua commanded the people to shout for victory. He also commands the people not to loot the city for personal plunder, but instead to turn all of the silver, gold, bronze and iron in to the treasury of the Lord. The city walls collapse, the Israelites destroy everything in the city, and Rahab and her family are spared and join the people of Israel.

QUESTIONS

- 1) Why were the things of the city of Jericho called “accursed”? Why might God have forbidden the people this loot?
- 2) Why might Joshua have cursed the city of Jericho?
- 3) According to Deuteronomy 20:10, did Jericho have to be destroyed?

Class 6
READING: Joshua 7-8, 1 Corinthians 5

ACHAN'S SIN

In Joshua 6:17-19 God had instructed Joshua and Israel not to keep the items taken in loot from the city of Jericho. Being an ancient trade city, it is very possible that it contained a great deal of valuable property. For one man of Judah, the temptation proved to be too much. Achan (called Achar in 1 Chronicles 2:6). Achan would later relate that he had seen a beautiful Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels. He took them and hid them in the ground of his tent.

Following the conquest of Jericho, the Israelites moved to the city of Ai, presuming it to be a relatively easy conquest. They prepare to assault the small town with a group of 3,000, but they are routed and forced into a retreat. This defeat breaks the heart of the people, and Joshua prostrated himself before God in the tabernacle, asking God why this loss was permitted.

God reveals that Israel had one who had sinned in the camp. God commanded that the one who transgressed was to be burned with fire, "he and all he has". After a process of elimination, Achan is revealed. He confesses his guilt and is executed, along with his household.

QUESTIONS

- 1) Why is it the case that the Scripture reads "Israel committed a trespass" when it was just one person (Achan)?
- 2) Why would God punish the entire nation for the sins of Achan?
- 3) Why did God not reveal directly who Achan was to Joshua? What does it mean that God would "take" the guilty tribe/family?
- 4) God had not mentioned this problem to Joshua before the assault. Why?
- 5) What is the lesson of having sin in the camp that we must consider today in light of 1 Corinthians 5?

VICTORY OVER AI

After this terrible ordeal is over, Joshua again prepares an assault on Ai. He creates a strategy in which the army lies in wait outside the town while a small force feints an attack. When they retreat, the entire city of Ai pursues them, and is ambushed and wiped out by the Israelite forces. The king of Ai was captured and executed, and the city burned to the ground.

Following this victory Joshua prepares the altar prescribed by Moses in Deuteronomy 27. He then wrote on it a copy of the law. From there he had the people assemble in two groups, fulfilling what they had been told to do in Deuteronomy 11. Half of the people observed the blessings of the Law, half observed the curses.

QUESTIONS

- 1) Why didn't God give another miraculous victory over Ai?
- 2) Why would the covenant of Moses contain both blessings and curses?

Class 7
READING: Joshua 9

THE DECEPTION OF THE GIBEONITES

The nations which heard of these victories gathered together to fight as one. However, there was one nation that acted a very different way. The city of Gibeon was a Hivite city just north of Jerusalem. In the next chapter they are identified as a strong city (stronger than Ai) filled with mighty men (warriors). They concocted a scheme; they would deceive the Israelites into believing they are from a far distant land seeking an accord with them. They disguise themselves with an appearance of having made a long journey. Joshua agrees to a covenant with these people. They then celebrate the

QUESTIONS

- 1) Could the Gibeonites have been delivered without deceit?
- 2) What was Joshua's guilt in this deception? Why might Joshua have acted as he did?
- 3) God does not speak in this chapter. What reasons can you think of for this?
- 4) What modern lessons can we learn from this event?

THE CONSEQUENCES OF DECEPTION

After three days the Israelites realize the deception. They move out to the cities of the Gibeonites (five cities seemed to be under their influence). Yet because of the covenant, they do not attack. Instead, Joshua confronts the Gibeonites for their deception. They admit the deception, and declare that this was necessary for them to be delivered. They witness the destruction of Jericho and Ai, and rather than than fight, they maneuvered to obtain peace.

Joshua cannot destroy them. Therefore, Joshua pronounces a curse on the Gibeonites. They will indeed be safe, but they will be slaves to the Israelites from this time on. They will be the water bearers and the wood cutters of the house of the Lord. Thus the Gibeonites are the first of the nations to be spared destruction.

QUESTIONS

- 1) Why didn't Joshua simply attack them? What does this tell us about a covenant made even deceptively?
- 2) How was the Gibeonite cursed? What was evil about their action?
- 3) How were the Gibeonites blessed? What is commendable or wise about their action?
- 4) Later we read about the Gibeonites in 2 Samuel 21:1-6. What did God do on their behalf? What does that tell us about their relationship with God?

CLASS 8
READING: Joshua 10-12

CONQUEST OF THE MOUNTAIN LAND

The king of the city of Jerusalem is Adonai-Zedek. Observing the defeat of the other cities and the peace that the Gibeonites made, he creates an alliance of kings to resist the people of Israel. Their first target is the city of Gibeon. This alliance of five kings then attacks the city of Gibeon.

The Gibeonites send messengers to Joshua, and Joshua, with God's permission, leads an assault on the attackers. God sends aid too in the form of hailstones from heaven, which killed more of the army than the attack. In the midst of the attack Joshua petitioned God and the sun and moon were stopped in the sky. Thus the Israelites gained a great victory over these five kings. Ultimately Joshua corners them in a cave, and then executes them in a public display.

At this point, a number of kings and cities mobilize in an attempt to repel this attack. We can see the hand of the Lord in this, as this forces many of the kings to leave their fortified cities and wage war in the open, allowing for quick victory.

QUESTIONS

- 1) Why might the kings of the Amorites target the Gibeonites first?
- 2) What is similar in the name "Adonai-zedek" to Jerusalem's more famous king in Genesis 14:18?
- 3) What does it mean that there was no day like this when the Lord's heeded the voice of a man?
- 4) How long did the sun remain still?
- 5) What does it mean that no one moved his tongue against the children of Israel?
- 6) If Joshua defeated the king of Jerusalem, why did David have to conquer it again?

CONQUEST OF THE MOUNTAIN LAND

The remaining kings of Canaan band together as one to face the Israelites with a massive army. They prepare themselves in a vast army that was uncountable. Facing this greatest army yet, God tells Joshua not to fear, but that by the next day they would have a great victory. God gave Joshua a victory over this vast army, which is the last great battle of the land. From this point on Joshua begins a piecemeal conquest of the remaining cities. One distinction is that (with one exception) the cities are not longer being burned.

Several important facts are presents in chapter 11. First, that this next period of time is "a long time". Second, that with the exception of Gibeon, none of the cities of Canaan surrendered. Finally, chapter 12 presents us with a list of the battles and victories in the land. The conquest is coming to an end, and the last verse of chapter 11 tells us that peace has come. Joshua conquered a total of 31 kings.

- 1) Why might the cities no longer be burned?
- 2) Why might none of the cities of Canaan have surrendered?

CLASS 9
READING: Joshua 13-19

THE LAND REMAINING

Having seen many years pass, Joshua, now an old man, is told by God that there remains territory to be conquered. Moses had divided them by lot, with Gad and Rueben receiving land on the far side of the Jordan, along with half of the tribe of Manasseh. Once more it is clarified that the Levites did not receive a portion of land as the other tribes.

In chapter 14 Caleb comes to Joshua with a request. He is now 85 years old (this may indicate that this request occurred early on in the conquest) and had been blessed with physical stamina. He desired to receive Hebron as his specific inheritance. This place was the dwelling city of the Anakim (giants), and perhaps few wanted it.

In Joshua 17 we read of the daughters of Zelophehad and their inheritance, which was discussed earlier in Numbers 26. They inherit as their male cousins the land, because of the edict of God through Moses years earlier. As well, we read that the tribes descended from Joseph desired more land, and were told to expand their borders into the land of the Perizzites

QUESTIONS

- 1) How old was Joshua when he died?
- 2) In chapter 14 (and Judges 1), who did Caleb get to conquer the city of Kirjath Sepher?
- 3) What are some significant events that happened at Hebron?
- 4) What happened to many of the Canaanites who were not driven out of the land?
- 5) Why did the descendants of Joseph not want the valley of Jezreel?

CONQUEST CONTINUED

The Tabernacle was set up in the area of Shiloh. We know it was there until the time of Eli, when it was (possibly) destroyed (Jer. 7:12). Seven of the tribes have not sought out their land. Joshua ordered them to survey the land and then to divide it by casting lots. This last period of division may not include the actual conquest of these lands, as seen in Judges 1-2. The last portion to be given was the land given personally to Joshua.

- 1) Is casting lots gambling?
- 2) Why did the tribe of Simeon share territory with Judah?
- 2) What did the tribe of Dan do/receive that was not part of their inheritance?

Class 10
READING: Joshua 20, Numbers 35

THE LAW OF THE CITY OF REFUGE

As the law dictated, Joshua and the Israelites set up the cities of refuge. One of the cities was the city given to Caleb; another was the city of Shechem, where Levi and Simeon murdered the inhabitants; now this very city is a refuge overseen by his descendants. The third city on the western side of the Jordan is Kedesh in Galilee, hometown of the judge Barak. On the eastern side of the Jordan the cities were Bezer, Ramoth (mentioned in the battle of Ahab and Jehoshaphat in 1 Kings 22), and Golan.

The legal purpose of the cities is very important. First, it needs to be understood that the land had been purified by the conquest. Thus, if someone were to die violently in the land, their “blood” would demand justice. Specifically in Numbers 35:33 God says *“So you shall not pollute the land where you are; for blood defiles the land, and no atonement can be made for the land, for the blood that is shed on it, except by the blood of him who shed it.”*

The law is particularly laid out in Numbers. There we read that the two parties involved are called the “manslayer” and the “blood avenger”. The manslayer must flee to the city of refuge for a dispensation of justice. The blood avenger is required to pursue. At the city, the intent of the crime is determined, and the manslayer either remains or is turned over to the blood avenger.

The most significant part of this law was that its purpose was to make a distinction in the criminal statute of murder based on intent. The term repeatedly used is hate; if one caused the death of another with hate in their heart, then they would be put to death as a murderer. This malice was made legally evidence by the circumstances of the death. As well, it is established here that a single witness is insufficient for a guilty sentence. Another interesting point was the denial of the concept of financial recompense for either death or a return before the death of the High Priest. In other words, no “redemption” was available.

Our interest in the city of refuge is to see it as a foreshadow of the church. The issues of security in a location, the death of the High Priest, and the language of blood avenging are all central to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Hebrew writer seems to hint at this in Hebrews 6:18, when he states *“we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us”*.

QUESTIONS

- 1) Why might the Levites be given the cities of refuge and not those tribes in whom they sat?
- 2) Who originally made the selection of the cities (Deut. 4:41)
- 3) What are some features of the cities of refuge that might have played into their selection? According to Deuteronomy 19:3, what else were the Israelites to set aside/build with the cities?
- 4) How does blood defile land? Where do we first hear of this idea?
- 5) How long was the manslayer to remain in the city of refuge?
- 6) What are the parallels between the city of refuge and the church of Christ?

Class 11
READING: Joshua 21-22

THE LEVITE INHERITANCE

The time has come for the dispersion of the Levite cities. In this chapter a total of 48 cities are designated as being a possession of the Levites. A number of these cities are Biblically important; Hebron, Gibeon, Shechem, Ramoth Gilead. In addition to the cities, the land surrounding them to a distance of 2000 cubits (roughly a mile) was attached to the city.

There is a particularly important passage at the end of this chapter, as the final dispersion has been completed. *“So the LORD gave to Israel all the land of which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they took possession of it and dwelt in it. The LORD gave them rest all around, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers. And not a man of all their enemies stood against them; the LORD delivered all their enemies into their hand. Not a word failed of any good thing which the LORD had spoken to the house of Israel. All came to pass”* (Joshua 21:43-45). This passage is tremendously important; it establishes that ALL of the promises made to Abraham regarding the land of Israel were fulfilled.

QUESTIONS

1) Why is it of such importance that we know that Scriptures state that the entire land promise was fulfilled?

A NEAR CIVIL WAR

With the conquest coming to a close, Joshua releases the tribes from east of the Jordan from their obligation to secure Canaan. As he releases them, he admonishes them not to depart from the Law of Moses.

After they return to their lands, these two and a half tribes decide to build a great altar, a replica of the tabernacle altar that was constructed for use at the tabernacle. They place this great altar at the Jordan river, perhaps at the location of their crossing.

When the other tribes heard of this, they prepared themselves to go to war against Reuben, Gad and Manasseh. They sent Phinehas as head of a delegation to confront the tribes east of the Jordan. The confrontation was a tense one; the eastern tribes are accused of failing away. But the response is surprising. The altar was not made to sacrifice, but as a memorial of the importance of the worship of God. In fact, the altar is named Witness, as a testimony that the Lord is God. So the war was averted and the delegation returned.

QUESTIONS

- 1) What other monuments were built at the Jordan River?
- 2) Why would the other Israelite tribes prepare for war over this?
- 3) Why would they send Phinehas? Who else did they send?
- 4) What sin did it appear the eastern tribes had committed?
- 4) Was this a wise decision overall for the eastern tribes?

Class 12
READING: Joshua 23

JOSHUA'S FIRST ADDRESS

While we were told back in chapter 13 that Joshua was old, now we seem to come to the end of his life. All of the land has been divided, although it has not yet been occupied by the Israelites. Joshua will no longer be leading the Israelites as a nation; from this point until the time of the kings (about 300 years) they will be led by judges in particular areas of Israel. Thus the last national leader of Israel has some final words for all of the people.

First, they are to keep their courage and to do all that the Law of Moses commands them. They are to absolutely avoid accepting or following the gods of the Canaanites around them. Joshua reminds them that it is because of this idolatry and paganism that these people are being dispossessed.

Joshua continues to remind them that they need to finish driving out the people in the lands. He reminds them that this battle has been the Lord's, not their own, and that this was how they were able to drive out a thousand men with one man. Their success has not been their own, but has been the Lord's success.

Finally, Joshua tells the people that they need to be careful to love the Lord. In chapter 22 vs. 5 he said to hold fast to the commandment of the Lord "with all your heart and all your soul", giving us a similar admonition as Moses did in Deuteronomy 6:5. They have a great many reasons to love the Lord. Joshua tells them that "*not one thing has failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spoke concerning you*". This is a double edged promise; Joshua concludes by reminding them that if all that God has promised that is good has come to pass, then all that He has promised in judgment will come to pass as well if they fail to remain faithful.

QUESTIONS

- 1) Joshua began with an admonition to be courageous, and it comes to a conclusion with the same admonition (23:6). Why is keeping courage such an important part of the final conquest?
- 2) What were some of the gods of the Canaanites that Joshua warned them against? Which ones were the most problematic to Israel?
- 3) What does it mean to turn aside to the right hand and to the left hand?
- 4) Who are some of the Canaanites that joined the Israelites (individuals or communities)? What does that tell us about God's command to exterminate the Canaanites?
- 5) One of the concerns of Joshua is that the Israelites would marry Canaanites. Why is that such a dangerous action? Was it always a sin?
- 6) Joshua warns Israel that if Israel intermingles with the Canaanites remaining, they would become "snares and traps" for them. What does this mean?
- 7) What did Joshua mean when he declared he was going the way of all the earth?
- 8) Who was not present for this first speech (22:1)? Was Joshua's previous admonition to them different (22:2-5)?

Class 13
READING: Joshua 24

JOSHUA'S SECOND ADDRESS

It is a bit of a misnomer to call chapter 24 Joshua's address, since it is actually God who is speaking to Israel through Joshua. It begins with a recap of history and idolatry. God declares that their ancestors before Abraham (including Terah) had served other gods on the other side of the river.

First, they are to keep their courage and to do all that the Law of Moses commands them. They are to absolutely avoid accepting or following the gods of the Canaanites around them. Joshua reminds them that it is because of this idolatry and paganism that these people are being dispossessed. God then continues with the story of their sojourn, from Egypt to the wilderness to the lands east of the Jordan, and finally to crossing of the Jordan and clearing Canaan.

Throughout this history lesson the theme remains the same: all of this was the Lord's doing. It was the Lord who brought them out of Egypt, and destroyed the Egyptian army. It was the Lord who overcame the nations who opposed them. It was the Lord who blessed them by Balaam, and delivered Jericho to them. God is bringing them into a land with cities, fields and vineyards already prepared for them.

The main theme comes to a head in vs. 14 – put away false gods and serve God alone. Joshua then makes a very personal point: whatever the children of Israel are going to do, he and his house will serve the Lord. The people then declare that they too will serve the Lord.

Now Joshua makes a surprise counter to Israel: they CANNOT serve the Lord. God is Holy and Jealous and will not forgive them for turning away from Him. This would invalidate the covenant of Moses and cause them to be consumed. This declaration only causes the people to be more adamant of their commitment to God. Therefore, Joshua makes a covenant and ordinance in Shechem with the people to serve God; he sets a stone as witness to this oath. Joshua concludes with two deaths and three burials. The people are on their own.

QUESTIONS

- 1) What does the expression "other side of the River" mean? What river is this discussing?
- 2) Why might they all be gathered at Shechem to hear God and not Shiloh, where the tabernacle resided (hint – 24:32)?
- 3) What is the difference between idolatry and paganism/worshipping false gods? What are the New Testament warnings against idolatry?
- 4) What were the seven nations that were to be disposed in vs. 11?
- 5) What did God send against the nations to drive them out ahead of time (24:12)? Do you think this is literal or symbolic?
- 6) Joshua declares that regardless of the choice of Israel, he and his house will serve the Lord. Why is this such an important declaration for us to consider?
- 7) Later in Shechem there is a shrine established at the pillar for "Baal-Berith", or Baal of the Covenant (Judges 9:4-6). Why is this a terrible irony?