

Joshua, chapter 1
Crossing into the Land | part 1

I | INTRODUCTION / CONNECTIONS / CONTEXT

1 / We are beginning today with a new course of study. For the next thirteen weeks, we'll be surveying three of the OT books: Joshua, Judges, and Ruth. Of course, there's a lot of content here for so few studies, so we won't be able to do any detailed chapter-by-chapter commentary on the contents of any of these books—although we will devote more time to specific content when we get to Ruth, mainly because it is shorter and also because of the historical/redemptive themes relating to Christ.

2 / But, for Joshua and Judges, we will have to content ourselves with giving some background information, along with showing the divisions of the book—how these two books are outlined to advance the narrative the inspired author wish to tell.

3 / So, to begin here with Joshua, let me answer some basic background questions before we get into the introductory chapter 1.

Who is Joshua, and what is his role in this book?

4 / This book is named for Joshua. And, he is the main human character in the book. However, Joshua isn't necessarily the author of the book. Joshua is mentioned in at least two places in this book as 'writing' down events that happened: **see 8.32 & 24.26**. However, all of the content of the book refers to Joshua in the third person as if someone is writing about him rather than him keeping a journal/log of his own.

5 / The events that happen here in Joshua did occur in their own real times, and someone was keeping a detailed account of the events—but it may have been someone other than Joshua. These detailed accounts were carefully kept.

- However, we do have some hints throughout the book that the book in its current finished form was completed at a later date. That detail is that: repeatedly, we are told that some event happened or some place was named such-and-such, and we are told '**as it is to this day.**' That little phrase '**to this day**' signifies that what happened in its real-time occurrence was still extant in the time when the book was finalized in its present form. The first occurrence of that phrase is in **ch 4.9** and is repeated some ~15 times throughout the narrative. So, at least we know this much: whoever authored and edited the book in its current form did so sometime after the events had taken place and were recorded in real-time.

6 / And, here's another point we need to keep in mind: even though Joshua was the God-appointed leader of the people and the most prominent human actor, he is NOT the main actor in all the narratives. **Yahweh, The LORD, God Himself is the main and most prominent Actor in the book!** Not only is He the One who first directly speaks to Joshua in the opening line of the book—and throughout—but He appears to Joshua in **ch 5.13-15** as "**...I AM the commander of the army of The LORD. Now I have come!**" to assure Joshua, not only that He is there present on their scenes, but that *everything that will be accomplished throughout the narrative of the book will be under His command and direction—and that He will be the One who is doing it!*

- Yahweh also presents Himself as the Divine Warrior who fight all their battles for them and give them all their victories. He is the Divine Presence who accompanies His people throughout all their generations, is evident on every page of the Bible, and will come '**in the fullness of time**' in the Person of Jesus Christ as '**Emmanuel-God with us!**'

7 / **But, who is Joshua, the son of Nun, of the tribe of Ephraim?** Joshua had been Moses' assistant ['minister' KJV--that's what Joshua is called in **ch 1.1**] since before they came out of Egypt.

- Joshua was surely among the elders of the people of Israel when they were in Egypt [see **Exodus 3.16**].

- Joshua's birth name was Hoshea [Savior], and Moses renamed him Joshua [Yahweh will save]. That re-naming is recorded in **Numbers 13.8 & 17** when Moses sent the twelve spies into Canaan from Kadesh-barnea to 'spy out' the land. And, in that instance, only he and Caleb trusted Yahweh to give them the land. So, Joshua had distinguished himself in Moses' estimation as a trustworthy assistant very early on, not only as a faithful servant, but as an assistant, a protégé.
- Joshua was also a military strategist and a valiant warrior. So much so, that the first time we meet Joshua in the Bible narrative is in **Exodus 17.8-16**. This was when the Amalekites [descendants of Esau] attacked the Israelites immediately upon their coming out of Egypt. Moses commissioned Joshua to 'general' that battle. This will help illuminate that meeting the Joshua had with '**I AM the Commander of the army of The LORD**' in **Joshua 5.13-15**. Joshua may have been the earthly Commander/General of Israel's fighting forces, but Yahweh Himself was the One who would fight and win all their battles!

8 / Joshua is then mentioned by name some ~30 times throughout the Pentateuch.

How is the Book of Joshua connected with the rest of the Bible—both in time and text?

1 / The book of Joshua is inseparably connected with the Pentateuch, the five books of Moses, that come before it. The chain of events and narrative is unbroken. In fact, when you open the book of Joshua and begin reading it, the very first words are: "**Now after the death of Moses the servant of The LORD, The LORD said to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant...**" This lets us know that Joshua will just pick up where Moses and the Pentateuch had left off with Moses' death. Everything you will read in **Joshua, chapter 1** has already been written—sometimes numerous times—in the previous books of Moses. The LORD now calls Joshua to finish the tasks that Moses had begun.

2 / Some specific Pentateuch texts that will lay the groundwork for this transition of leadership are: **Numbers 27.12-23; Deuteronomy 31.23; 34.9; and others.**

3 / As for the connections of Joshua with the rest of the Bible narrative, we will see that **Joshua** is connected with **Judges** the same way in the opening line of **Judges: "After the death of Joshua..."** And, then the book of Ruth [these are the three books of our current survey course] opens with: "**In the days when the judges ruled...**" So you can easily see from the words that authors write in all these books that they are giving us an unbroken, uninterrupted narrative of Israel's history during those centuries when Israel was being formed as Yahweh's covenant nations.

4 / And then, from the book of Ruth, the Bible narrative continues on with the histories of Samuel, who followed after the judges—and from there into the histories of the kings of Israel [and Judah]—which will 'set the table' for David who is introduced in the book of Ruth—and who will foreshadow and 'pre-enact' the Christ, God's anointed and appointed King of kings and Lord of lords.

What is the Book of Joshua all about? What are its main purposes, themes, and lessons?

1 / The main, primary, over-arching theme of the book of Joshua is **God's faithfulness to fulfill all the covenant promises He has made to His people—both in that immediate historical context, and forevermore!** As we see when we begin reading the book, Joshua is all about '**the land**' Yahweh had promised to give them as their inheritance, place of habitation with Him, and as their 'rest.' Over and over, Yahweh repeats the promises that He had made to Abraham first, and then re-affirmed them to the other covenant patriarchs, Isaac and Jacob, in **Genesis 12.1-7; 13.15-17; 15.12-21; 17.8; and others.** The people of Israel kept this promise of their covenant 'Promised Land' in all their longings all during their 400-year enslavement in Egypt. When Yahweh appeared to Moses in the burning bush, He reiterated His covenant promises [**Exodus 2.23-25; 3.7-8**]. Their entrance into the Promised Land was delayed for 38 ½ years when they faithlessly rebelled against Yahweh at Kadesh-barnea [**Numbers 14**]. But now, Yahweh has faithfully kept them through their forty years of wandering in the desert and defeated all their enemies along the way. They are now encamped on the east bank of the Jordan, looking westward across the Jordan into the Promised Land.

2 / And so, what the book of Joshua will chronicle for us is how Yahweh faithfully fulfilled everything He promised He would give them and do for them. After all is said and done, the primary theme of Joshua and the purpose for its writing is found in **ch 21.43-45: Thus The LORD gave to Israel all the land that he swore to give to their fathers. And they took possession of it, and they settled there.**⁴⁴ **And The LORD gave them rest on every side just as he had sworn to their fathers. Not one of all their enemies had withstood them, for The LORD had given all their enemies into their hands.**⁴⁵ **Not one word of all the good promises that the Lord had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass.** And this same theme and purpose is repeated again in a brief historical summary in **ch 24.1-13.**

3 / There are numerous other themes and purposes that are developed and emphasized throughout the narrative [this is copied from the ESV Study Bible]:

The theological lessons to glean from the pages of Joshua are many:

- The Lord’s abiding presence as the key to strength and courage (e.g., [1:5, 9](#)).
- The centrality of the Lord’s instructions for succeeding in one’s mission and acting with insight; land and rest as divine gifts ([1:7-8](#)).
- The ability of the Lord to save the “outsider” (Rahab), and the danger of the “insider” falling away (Achan; see [chs. 2 and 7](#)).
- The Lord as divine Warrior and the reality of judgment when iniquity is full (e.g., [10:42; 11:19-20](#)).
- The danger of presumption and failure to inquire of the Lord (e.g., [9:14](#)).
- The Lord as protector of the covenant (e.g., [10:1-15](#), esp. [v. 11](#)).
- The unity of the people of God ([18:1-10; 22:34](#)).
- The sovereignty of God in giving his people place and rest ([1:13; 11:23; 21:43-45](#)).
- The faithfulness of God in fulfilling all his good promises ([1:2; 21:43-45](#)).
- The necessity of removing false gods and worshiping God alone ([ch. 24](#)).

The list could continue.

How does the Book of Joshua point to Christ?

1 / This is one of the most essential lessons we must learn and keep in mind as we read anywhere in the Bible. As Jesus said in **Luke 24.27: And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He interpreted to them all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.** And again, in **v 44: “These are the words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.”** And so, everything that is written in the book of Joshua speaks of Christ.

2 / But here are just a couple ‘Christ-themes’ that jump out at us as we look ahead and also from a NT hindsight and retrospect:

- The very name ‘Joshua’ is the Hebrew OT name for the NT Greek ‘Jesus.’ The name translates as ‘Yahweh [Jehovah] saves’ [**see Matthew 1.21**]. In fact, in the KJV, Joshua is called ‘Jesus.’ In fact, in the KJV, Joshua is called ‘Jesus.’ This is not only because their names are the same in OT and NT, but also because the OT Joshua ‘pre-enacts’ or serves as a historical type and foreshadowing of what Jesus the Christ will do when He comes in **‘the fullness of time.’**
- And so, in his OT role, Joshua led the military charges to save Israel from all their enemies who were occupying Israel’s Promised Land and inheritance.
- More importantly and pointedly, the OT Joshua led God’s covenant people into their promised ‘rest’ [**see ch 1.13, 15, and numerous other references throughout**]. In the over-arching redemptive covenant plan of God, Joshua was ‘pre-enacting’ how our Jesus came to lead us into our eternal New Covenant ‘rest’ in the New Creation—after He has redeemed us, delivered us from our bondage to sin, fought all our battles for us, conquering and subduing our enemies, and delivered us to the Father [**see Hebrews 3-4**].

How is the Book of Joshua divided—and what does each section describe?

The theme of Joshua is **“the land”** and how Yahweh fulfilled all His covenant promises to give them their inheritance in **“the land.”** Even just in **ch 1**, the phrase is repeated over and over: **“the land I have given you ... the land I am giving you to inherit ... the land that I swore to their fathers to give ... just as I promised to Moses”** etc. So, the whole narrative of Joshua is an account of how Yahweh gave them their Promised Land. We will recognize and point out those same developments of the narrative, and they will be the titles of the five lessons we will survey [:

- **chs 1-5: Crossing into the land** [two lessons]
- **chs 6-12: Taking the land**
- **chs 13-21: Dividing the land**
- **chs 22-24: Serving The LORD in the land**

Joshua, chapter 1 | Crossing into the land, part 1

Since we have already referred much to the various elements of the content of chapter 1 in our introductory remarks, I will just give you here a brief breakdown outline of the chapter. **Chapter 1** is composed of three conversations; so that is how we will follow it:

1 / vv 1-9: Yahweh’s charge to Joshua.

- After reminding Joshua of Moses’ death and His previous Divine appointment of Joshua to be Israel’s God-appointed leader, The LORD re-affirms the promises He’s made before to give them their Promised Land. Even the surveyed boundaries of their inheritance had been pre-announced, and now The LORD commits to give it all to them. **See Deuteronomy 11.24-25.**
- The LORD gives Joshua His personal assurance of His Presence: **Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you.** This promise is given to us all in **Hebrews 13.5.**
- But Joshua must continue to trust Yahweh in all their ways. He must **be strong and courageous ... Only be strong and very courageous.** But Joshua is not only commanded to **be strong and very courageous** in his military campaigns and wars, but also in **being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left...** [Those are sometimes the hardest times to be brave—when our implicit trust and faith in God is required and obedience is difficult...] **“This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.”**
- The LORD re-asserts His absolute authority to command all the servants and agents of His Kingdom—but also promises and commits: **...for The LORD your God is with you wherever you go.**

2 / vv 10-15: **Joshua relays commands to his ‘officers of the people’ according to what The LORD had commanded him.** Everyone must prepare to cross the Jordan when Yahweh gives the command. But do so in full confidence that The LORD will faithfully accompany them: **“...to take possession of the land that The LORD your God is giving you to possess.”** Then follows specific instructions to what we call ‘the two and a half tribes’: Reuben, Gad, half-tribe of Manasseh. Their story goes back to **Numbers 32.19-32.** Remember, they are still on the west banks of the Jordan—they haven’t crossed Jordan yet. But these tribes had asked Moses back then if they could receive their inheritance in those regions since the landscape was well-suited to their agricultural and herdsman vocations. Moses [from Yahweh] gave them permission to inherit Transjordan on one condition: they must cross over with their brothers and fight their battles with them until their inheritances were secured. Then, they could return back to their chosen inheritances Transjordan.

3 / vv 16-18: **This third brief conversation is the response of the Transjordan tribes that they will live up to that commitment—and then they encourage Joshua to lead them all as Yahweh had commanded him—“Only be strong and courageous.”**