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Introductory Thoughts

What is the message of the book of Joshua? What did it mean to the Israelites, both the generations in Joshua's day, as well as the subsequent generations?

There are several general features about the book that are worth noting. This is the sixth book of the Bible and the first to bear the name of a man. The number six in Scripture is often associated with man (Gen. 1:26, 31, Rev. 13:18). The first five books of the Bible are called the law or the books of Moses. These books reveal the will of God. The book of Joshua chronicles the carrying out of God's will.

We should recognize that there has only been one Man able to fully and completely, without failure, carry out the will of God on planet earth, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. Also, Joshua is the first man told to regulate his life by a book (Ex. 17:14).

Moses (the lawgiver) was not able to bring the Israelites into the land. That land was the great inheritance, the portion God would give the Israelites by His grace. This was the blessing of God promised to Israel.

What Moses could not do,
Joshua did do.

The New testament parallel is found in Romans 8:3, "For what the law [Moses] could not do ... God sending His own Son [Jesus]" did accomplish. In this sense, Joshua the man, portrays the work of the Lord Jesus.

Interestingly enough, "Jesus" is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew name "Joshua." It is fitting then to see that what Moses, the law, could not do, Joshua, a prototype of Christ, did accomplish, although of course, not on the same level as the Lord Jesus.

Layout of Book

As to the division of the book, it is helpful to chart a table of contents based upon the events recorded by the author. (See chart on left). One way to view Joshua, the book, is to observe that the book is divided into two major "movements" or sections. Section I is marked by the united effort of the Israelites under the direction

of Joshua, fighting together to claim their inheritance. This section from Chapter 1 through chapter 12 contains a number of "3s":

3 MAJOR:

<u>Objectives</u>	<u>Obstacles</u>	<u>Miracles</u>
Bring Them In	Flooded Jordan	Jordan's Crossing
Establish Law	Walled Cities	Jericho/Ai Defeated
Destroy Enemies	Enemy Coalition	Hailstones / Sun & Moon Stand Still

Section II of the book differs significantly in that Israel now goes out, not as a united whole, but as individuals; individual tribes, and occasionally, tribes banded together to form a coalition. Gone also are the mighty miracles, the *direct* interventions from Heaven that so mark section I.

Section I climaxes with the phrase, "the land rested from war" (11:23), and then ends with a list of victories in chapter 12. Yet we find Section II containing statements such as, "There remaineth yet very much land to be possessed.." (13:1), and, "How long will ye be slack to go up and possess the land.." (18:3).

Section II also contains four accounts of individuals or groups that are examples by way of their desire for the inheritance or for more of the inheritance. They come and ask Joshua and thus are models in the respect that their desires were for the things of God.

- Chapter 14 - Caleb
- Chapter 15 - Achsah
- Chapter 17 - Zelophchads
- Chapter 17 - Josephites

In the second half of Joshua, the people are exhorted to go out and make good their possessions. They were to possess their inheritance, secure it, defend it, expand it and develop that which God had brought them into. So we see that the very order of the book suggests New Testament truths that can be applied to the believer's life and walk.

JOSHUA AND EPHESIANS

Joshua 1-12 shows how Israel came into the land, their inheritance from God. It was achieved by God's work for them. Ephesians 1-3 shows the church how their inheritance is "in Christ" in heavenly places. "In whom [Christ] we also have obtained an inheritance" (1:11). And that inheritance is not by the work of man, but a gift from God, solely wrought by the death and resurrection of Christ.

Joshua 13-24 shows Israel's responsibility to claim their inheritance and function in it for God's glory. Ephesians 4-6 shows the church's responsibility to "walk worthy of the vocation where-with ye are called" (4:1). We are to walk in the power of the salvation we now have, for His glory.

In Section I the story is of how Israel received their inheritance, which equates to the blessing of God. It was not Moses, the law, but Joshua who led them in. Yet, more than this, the book emphasizes strongly that it wasn't through their striving or their own ability that they got in to Canaan. God performed mighty miracles to accomplish their "salvation."

Thus, the Jordan river was crossed at floodtide, (ch. 3:4), the walls of Jericho taken down, (ch. 6), the hail-stones from heaven defeating the enemies was accompanied by the sun and moon standing still (ch. 10). How this pictures to us the truth of the gospel! How is it that we get into the blessing of God? (Eph. 1:3; 1Pet. 1:7,8). It is not through what we do for God. Neither is it by our own strength or ability. It is what Christ has done by going down into that place of death, then rising victoriously, defeating all enemies that were against us, even death itself.

But, like we find in Section II, once brought in to the land there were still battles to be fought and territory to be possessed. The Israelites had to *make good* their inheritance. Likewise believers in the Lord Jesus, secure in His salvation and brought into the great inheritance that is "in Christ," must now "possess their possessions." The stress now is upon our responsibility,

for He shall save His people

depending upon Him, to develop our inheritance and maximize its benefits. There are battles to be fought and enemies that sometimes creep back in to encroach upon areas of our lives. Thus, steadfastness and vigilance are required as well as the energy of faith.

Toward the close of the book, we find Joshua still challenging the people with these words:

"How long will ye be slack.."

Even in the final chapter he calls upon them to make their decision:

"...choose you this day whom ye will serve.."

In Section II the Lord made provisions so that His testimony was able to be maintained. The Tabernacle was erected (ch.18) and the worship and service of God carried on according to His word. Land grants were allotted to the Levites (ch. 21) so that God's service might continue uninterrupted. Cities of refuge were established (ch. 20) to provide refuge and protection and keep the land free from the shedding of innocent blood.

In this, the "church age," the Lord has made every provision necessary for the maintenance of His service & worship, the expansion of His work and the blessing of His people. This provision is found in the church, which is the spiritual house of God, the Word of God and the Lord Jesus, our great High Priest.

(See 1Tim. 3:16; 2Tim. 3:15-17; Heb. 10:21)

Closing Challenges

The closing chapters of Joshua present some of the challenges faced by the Israelites as they sought to carry out God's will in the land. There was the test of "doctrine" that nearly split the nation from east to west (ch. 22). They were warned of the danger of compromise with the nations around them. The ever-present danger of intermarriage with pagans would prove to be a ma-

from their sins." Matt. 1:21

ajor problem in the subsequent history of the nation. Many of these dangers were challenges to their loyalty and love for the Lord. Joshua calls an all-tribal assembly (23:2) and puts it straight before the people, the difficulty of serving the Lord: "He is a Jealous God" (24:19).

The people covenant together to dedicate themselves wholly to the Lord. Their decision is inscribed upon a stone for a memorial. From time to time they would pass by the stone and evaluate their lives in regard to their decision to follow the Lord.

The next book, Judges, continues where Joshua ends. Joshua, the man, dies and the people are left to carry on. Similarly, the Lord Jesus has ascended back into glory and has left us here to carry out His will.

PICTURE of CHRIST

In chapters 1-12, Joshua is presented as the conqueror of the enemies. This depicts the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus in conquering Satan, sin and death by the cross and resurrection.

In chapters 13-24, Joshua is absent as a warrior but is now directing the affairs of Israel. This depicts the heavenly ministry of Christ as the Head of His church.

From time to time, it does us good to check our heart's devotion to Him in light of the truth of His word. How are we carrying on? Perhaps it is true with us, individually and corporately, that "there remaineth much land yet to be possessed." Let us rejoice in the undeniable victories that have been accomplished. Let us remember all that He has brought us in to. And let us also realize that there are still enemies to fight and "territory" to be claimed and developed for Him and for His glory.

Larry Price

Chronicle #6b of 'The Bible of God' series looks at lessons from the stones in the book of Joshua

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6a

Joshua An Overview

Behind them lay the Land of Egypt and the wilderness. Before them was Canaan, the promised land, the land that flowed with "milk and honey." What bright prospects lay ahead! To be sure, there were tremendous obstacles and fierce enemies. Yet the Israelites were now poised on the border of the inheritance God had promised hundreds of years before to Abraham. Here they were, in the timing and plan of God, ready to enter in, claim the land and realize in their very experience the blessing of God.

The book of Joshua is the historical record of the conquest of the land of Canaan. It is the record of the military conquests conducted by the nation of Israel, under the direction of Joshua, and ultimately, under the direction of the Captain of the Lord's Host. (Josh. 5:15).

Joshua continues where the book of Deuteronomy ends, that is, with the death of Moses and the Israelites on the brink of entering into the land. It is a story of military campaigns and miraculous events.