

Introduction to the Book of Joshua

I. Joshua, the man:

Known by various names in scripture: Oshea (Num.13:8, 16); Moses gave him the longer name Jehoshua (Num.13:16); shortened to Hoshea (Deut.32:44); in Greek, Jesus (Heb.4:8)

- First seen as military commander against Amalekites (Ex.17:8-14);
- Servant of Moses: Ex.24:13 (compare Elijah and Elisha)
- Ephraimite Prince and Spy (Numbers 13:8)
- Supported Moses against ten rebellious spies (Numbers 14:6, 10)
- Successor to Moses (Numbers 27:18-23; Deut.31:7-8)
- As a spy had said that God could help Israel conquer. Now he must put his money where his mouth is!

II. The book of Joshua:

A. Theme and significance

- First of the collection that the Jewish Bible calls the “Former Prophets”
- The theme of the book is the conquest and settlement of Canaan, in fulfillment of God’s promises made to Israel’s ancestors (21:43-45).

B. The historical setting:

- Date of entering Canaan— Approximately 1452/51 BC
- Probably written at least 25 years after the initial invasion.
- Second generation after the exodus. Moses has just died and left Joshua in command

C. Authorship:

- Written by a contemporary writer, while Rahab was still living (6:25).
- Jewish tradition ascribes to Joshua (see 24:26), and he may have been its substantial author, though it has not necessarily come down to us without interpolations or editorial input from others. Some parts describe events after his death. Traditionally, his death (24:29-32) was written by Eleazer, and the death of Eleazer (24:33) was written by Phineas.

D. Outline of the book:

- I. Entering the Land (chapters 1-5)
- II. Conquering the Land (chapters 6-12)
- III. Division of the Land (chapters 13-22)
- IV. Joshua’s Farewell Addresses (Chapters 23-24)

(See reverse side)

III. Ethical Issues

A. Is this like Islam’s Jihad?

1. Not conversion by the sword, but divine judgment upon the wicked (Deut.9:4-5 / Gen.15:16)
2. God is not bloodthirsty (Exodus 34:6-7 / Ezek.33:11)
3. Ethics of genocide?
 - God’s prerogatives (Jeremiah 18:1-6)
 - Taking God’s side (Psalm 139:19-22)
 - If the children were spared, but left as orphans, who would adopt them?
 - Eternal vs. temporal fates. Would they be better off growing up pagans, or dying innocent? (Isa.7:16 / 57:1-2)
4. Holy war as a “type” of spiritual warfare (1 Cor.10:6, 11 / 2 Cor.10:4-5)

B. God and War:

1. War as divine judgment
2. Non-parallels between biblical wars and modern wars
 - There is no promised land, or political nation who are “God’s people”
 - Whom does God wish to judge? How can we know?
 - Who are we identified with— Christ’s kingdom, or domicile nations?

IV. Typological nature of the book:

A. Joshua, a type of Christ—successor to Moses (the Law)

B. Canaan= “rest” (Deut.3:20; 12:9; 25:19 / Josh.1:13; 23:1/ Heb.3:7—4:11)

Canaan not primarily a type of heaven

- It is a place of conflict and progressive conquest
- It is not an unconditionally secure venue
- Hebrews 4:3—“We who have believed *do* enter into that rest”

V. Lessons

Ch.1— No fear, God’s promise to be with us (v.5; Heb.13:5)

Ch.2—Faith and works (Heb.11:31; James 2:25)

Ch.3—Stepping out by faith (vv.15-16)

Ch.4—Memorial stones (vv.19-24)

Ch.5—Whose side is God on? (vv.13-14)

Ch.6—Gentile salvation; God’s strategies

Ch.7—Sin in the camp

Ch.9—Failure to consult the Lord; keeping promises

Ch.21—Mission accomplished, Promise fulfilled (vv.43-45)

Ch.24—Choose whom you will serve (v.15)

Ch.24—“Me and my house” (v.15)